

Barbotte

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ABSTRACT

Barbotte

Alexander R. St-Laurent

This project recreates the real-life events surrounding Harry Davis's murder in July of 1946. Davis, the kingpin of Montreal's underworld, functioned as an intermediary between the city's organized crime and corrupt city officials. His murder by fellow mobster Joe Miller provoked a period of civic and legal reform, starting with the hiring of the incorruptible Pacificque "Pax" Plante as Chief of police and head of the special unit known as the Morality Squad.

The unit had been designed to take down the city's organized crime, but served as little more than a pretense to appease upright taxpayers. After decades of cooperation and payoffs between the police, politicians and the underworld, civic unrest lead Plante to step in to cleanse both the city and the police department of immoral and illegal activities, vowing to shine a light on the "Feydeau farce" that was the judicial system.

Plante's hiring, however, soon proved to be yet another pretense, as he was quickly relieved of his position, restoring the balance of power to corruption and profiteering. Plus ça change...

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Characters

- Joseph-Ovila Asselin, *Chairman of the City's Executive Committee*
- Louis Greco, *Wiseguy*
- Captain Arthur Asselin, *Chief of Police and Head of Morality Squad*
- Officer Christopher Flannery, *Veteran Police Officer*
- Officer Christopher Kells, *Young Police Officer*
- Pacifique "Pax" Plante, *Lawyer*
- Joe Miller, *Wiseguy*
- Gordie "The Pride of The Pointe" Quine, *Up and coming Boxer/Doorman*
- Octave Fraser, *Fall Guy*
- Harry Ship, *Bookmaker/Promoter/Gambler*
- Harry Davis, *Edgeman*
- Voice on the Radio
- Photographer
- Swat Officers

Act 1

(Montreal, summer of 1946. An office at city hall. J.O. ASSELIN is at his desk reading a newspaper. After a moment LOUIS GRECO enters and removes his hat.)

LOUIS GRECO

I've stopped reading the news, myself. Too depressing. Day doesn't go by an unfortunate incident don't befall some unsuspecting sucker.

ASSELIN

I have no choice, Mr. Greco. I must pay attention to the needs and wants of the people.

LOUIS GRECO

And what do the people want these days?

ASSELIN

(Putting down the paper.)

Lower taxes and longer lives, it would seem.

LOUIS GRECO

So they're asking for miracles then.

ASSELIN

One must keep the faith, Mr. Greco. Especially when one's odds appear unfavourable. Do you not agree?

LOUIS GRECO

I think one would be wise to keep one's prayers for Sunday dinner. The Lord don't give a damn for odds, good or bad.

ASSELIN

You forget that the Lord has His hand in all things.

LOUIS GRECO

Sure, but a straight flush takes the pot whether the Lord willed it or not.

(LOUIS GRECO hands ASSELIN an envelope. ASSELIN takes it and puts in his coat pocket.)

LOUIS GRECO

It's all there.

ASSELIN

I do not doubt it, Mr. Greco. Your employer may have his quirks, but he is constant. A dependable businessman.

LOUIS GRECO

That's one way of saying it.

ASSELIN

The fewer ripples in the pond, the better.

LOUIS GRECO

We understand that. Will that be it?

ASSELIN

No. One thing more.

LOUIS GRECO

What?

ASSELIN

It is concerning the fight this weekend. Between Dubois and Quine.

LOUIS GRECO

Should be a wild one. Odds have Quine at 4 to 1.

ASSELIN

Yes. It would be quite the prize if Dubois took it in the 5th, no?

LOUIS GRECO

I suppose it would. If one were lucky enough to bet that way, that is.

ASSELIN

What do you know of the Quine boy?

LOUIS GRECO

He's Harry Ship's guy. Run of the mill potato head from the Point. Comes from a family of nobodies. Works as Ship's door man when he ain't training.

ASSELIN

Yes, but will he seize an opportunity when presented with one?

LOUIS GRECO

What do you mean?

ASSELIN

You just said it yourself, Mr. Greco, one should not turn to the Lord for favourable odds. This potato head, as you call him, would he be open to an arrangement that might be to our mutual benefit? A business deal, in other words.

LOUIS GRECO

I'm not sure. Up and comers like this, they got their eyes set on the glory, not the gold.

ASSELIN

Maybe we can guide him towards a more pragmatic view of life then.

LOUIS GRECO

Maybe we can.

ASSELIN

Good. And Mr. Ship? How would he feel about such a deal?

LOUIS GRECO

Ship understands that what Davis says goes.

ASSELIN

Is that so?

LOUIS GRECO

Yeah, it's so.

ASSELIN

Well, if that is the case, then what are these whispers this I keep hearing of margarine deals?

LOUIS GRECO

Hey, we know the arrangement. No whores and no margarine.

ASSELIN

The dairy farmers of this province are a capital asset to Le Chef and all of this administration, I don't think I need to remind-

LOUIS GRECO

You don't.

ASSELIN

So your employer is willing to provide a deed of indemnity to these very important voters? This illicit and forbidden margarine is-

LOUIS GRECO

Listen, I'll look into it.

ASSELIN

Yes, Mr. Greco, look into it. While I may admire his entrepreneurship, Mr. Ship's success must be-

LOUIS GRECO

Ship will be kept in place.

ASSELIN

Good.

(There's a knock at the door.)

ASSELIN

Entrez. You can go now Mr. Greco.

LOUIS GRECO

Yeah, you bet.

(LOUIS GRECO turns to leave. CPT. TACHÉ enters, followed by OFFICERS FLANNERY & KELLS.)

LOUIS GRECO

If it ain't the Paddy Squad. It's almost noon, shouldn't you micks be drowning in cheap beer by now?

OFFICER KELLS

(Taking hold of his nightstick.)

Mind yer bloody manners.

OFFICER FLANNERY

Easy, boyo. You'll never catch your breath if ya lose yer temper every time a guinea says something ignorant.

LOUIS GRECO

I thought coppers were supposed to have a sense of humour. Isn't that why you wear those ridiculous looking uniforms?

OFFICER KELLS

Funny you mention my uniform, your wife loves-

ASSELIN

Bon. Assez. Capitaine Taché, que voulez-vous?

CPT. TACHÉ

Il y a eu un incident.

LOUIS GRECO

I'll leave you to your cop problems. See you around flatfoots.

CPT. TACHÉ

Just a minute, Greco.

ASSELIN

Oui, capitaine, je vous écoute.

CPT. TACHÉ

Il y a eu une explosion. At Harry Davis's Mansfield street operation. It looks like someone threw a grenade or something of the sort.

LOUIS GRECO

Hold on a minute.

ASSELIN

Sacrament! Détails, Captain, give me the détails.

CPT. TACHÉ

Aucun blessé ou mort. Very little damage. The attempt was botched.

ASSELIN

Alors, où est le problème?

CPT. TACHÉ

Les simonacs de journalistes. Ils voient la guerre de la Pègre partout. Ils essaient de vendre l'idée que Montréal deviendra le prochain Chicago. Ça va faire la une de tous les journaux du pays.

ASSELIN

Avez-vous au moins arrêté quelqu'un pour les satisfaire, capitaine?

CPT. TACHÉ

Sans témoins, il n'y a pas de suspects, monsieur.

ASSELIN

Et puis après?

LOUIS GRECO

Never mind witnesses and suspects. I bet my left ball it was that mutt Joe Miller.

CPT. TACHÉ

Your employer said something similar.

ASSELIN

Joe Miller? Why is that name familiar to me?

LOUIS GRECO

He used to have my job.

ASSELIN

And now?

CPT. TACHÉ

He's a known associate of Harry Ship.

ASSELIN

What was it that you said about putting people in their place, Mr. Greco?

LOUIS GRECO

I'll look into it, goddamn it.

(LOUIS GRECO exits.)

ASSELIN

Flannery, follow Mr. Greco. Kells, find Miller and follow him.

OFFICERS FLANNER & KELLS

Oui, monsieur.

(They exit.)

ASSELIN

Croyez-vous que monsieur Miller est responsable?

CPT. TACHÉ

Peu importe. Davis y croit, lui.

ASSELIN

Pourquoi?

CPT TACHÉ

D'après ce que je comprends, Miller a demandé la permission d'ouvrir son propre réseau, Davis lui a refusé, puis Miller pété les plombs.

ASSELIN

Bon. Convoquez une conférence de presse et annoncez la formation d'un comité d'enquête sur les événements de la rue Mansfield. Congédiez cinq, non, dix, de vos hommes et insistez sur le fait que des erreurs ont été commises et que la Ville de Montréal insiste que ses fonctionnaires respectent la responsabilité collective.

CPT TACHÉ

Oui, monsieur.

ASSELIN

Et puis l'histoire entre Davis et Ship? Est-ce que ça risqué de devenir un problème?

CPT TACHÉ

Dur à dire. Les affaires de monsieur Davis roulent, et il maintient son autorité sur la pègre, mais Ship est intelligent, enthousiaste, et bien aimé. D'après moi, ça va se calmer avec le temps.

ASSELIN

Espérons-le. Les journalistes ont l'ennuyeuse habitude d'attiser les flammes.

CPT. TACHÉ

Oui, mais les électeurs sont facilement distraits. Bientôt ils seront préoccupés par le nouveau spectacle de Lily St Cyr, ou bien par le Rocket, ou bien par autre chose.

ASSELIN

Dieu merci pour mademoiselle St. Cyr. Si vous étiez un parieur, est-ce que vous miseriez sur Davis, ou Ship?

CPT. TACHÉ

Les paris sont illégaux, monsieur. Mais quelque chose me dit que Davis serait le bon choix.

ASSELIN

Très bien, capitaine. Un parieur ferait bien de miser sur le gars Dubois ce weekend, si c'était permis dans cette noble ville, bien sûr.

(There's a knock at the door.)

CPT. TACHÉ

Entendu.

ASSELIN

Entrez! Merci, capitaine. Au revoir.

(CPT. TACHÉ exits as PAX enters.)

ASSELIN

Maître Plante. Je présume que vous ne me faites pas une visite sociale?

PAX

Pas tout à fait, Monsieur Asselin. Au fait, je ne vous écoutais pas, mais j'ai cru comprendre que vous discutiez du combat de boxe avec le capitaine Taché?

ASSELIN

Oui. Vous êtes un enthousiaste de la boxe, Maître Plante?

PAX

Non, monsieur. Je n'aime pas trop la faune que cela attire.

ASSELIN

Oui, bien sûr. Des sauvages, autrement dit. Alors, comment puis-je vous aider?

PAX

Je viens offrir mes services. Je viens d'apprendre au sujet de l'explosion sur Mansfield.

ASSELIN

Oui, quelle malchance. Nos meilleurs hommes préparent déjà l'enquête. Nous n'avons pas besoin d'un avocat pour une telle enquête.

PAX

Vous seriez bien surpris par ce que je pourrais accomplir. Bien que je ne doute pas de vos efforts, Monsieur Asselin,

j'ai raison de croire que vos hommes ne sont pas aussi intègres que vous ne les croyez.

ASSELIN

Je suis fier de vous informer que nous avons une longueur d'avance sur vous, Maître Plante. Capitaine Taché surveille de près les correctives prévus dans notre département. En tant que président du comité exécutif de la ville, j'insiste sur le fait que nous maintenons un dévouement à l'amélioration de la vie de nos chers citoyens et électeurs.

PAX

Tout ça est bien, mais le capitaine Taché n'est peut-être pas l'homme pour faire une telle enquête.

ASSELIN

Capitaine Taché est un policier très compétent. Son mandat en tant que chef de l'escouade de la moralité a été, jusqu'ici, exemplaire.

PAX

Oh, soyons sérieux. Capitaine Taché est le septième chef de l'escouade en dix ans. Et la pègre n'a jamais été mieux organisée. L'escouade est une parure, une devanture qui n'a rien de moral.

ASSELIN

Je vous suggère d'être prudent, Maître Plante. Vous le savez, en tant qu'avocat, que les mots sont lourds de conséquences.

PAX

Je n'accuse personne, monsieur. Pas encore. Mon collègue Maître Drapeau, et moi, comme vous le savez bien, montons actuellement une enquête très foieillée contre les gangsters connus, ainsi que leurs associés. Des individus tels Harry Davis, Louis Greco, Fred Zerbotiny-

Asselin

Je suis conscient de ce qui se passe dans ma ville, Maître Plante.

PAX

Et pourtant ces hommes sont libres de poursuivre leurs activités illégales.

ASSELIN

Hélas, nous faisons tout ce que nous pouvons avec les ressources dont nous disposons.

PAX

C'est pour cela que de centaines de maisons de jeux, sont toujours rouvertes quelques heures après avoir été perquisitionné?

ASSELIN

Où voulez-vous en venir, Maître Plante?

PAX

Désolé, ma passion m'emporte. Engagez-moi comme chef de l'escouade de la moralité, et je vais mettre fin à cette farce de Feydeau.

ASSELIN

Capitaine Taché est le chef de l'escouade de la moralité. Pourquoi ne pas vous préoccuper de votre tâche: celle de monter un dossier contre le commerce et la production illégale de margarine. Un dossier qui n'avance pas très vite...

PAX

Je doute fort que le capitaine Taché fait tout ce qu'il peut. Pourquoi si peu de clients sont arrêtés? Pourquoi n'utilise-t-il pas la presse à son avantage pour démontrer aux gens ce qui se passe réellement dans cette ville? Donnez-moi l'escouade et Montréal s'en portera mieux.

ASSELIN

Ces choses prennent du temps, le système judiciaire exige des preuves substantielles, et non de simples accusations. Nous montons notre dossier et si nous avons besoin de vos services, Maître Plante, nous vous appellerons.

PAX

Ces personnes ne vivent pas selon les lois et les règles de la société civilisée. Ils font ce qu'ils veulent, et ils prennent ce qu'ils veulent. Et quiconque se met en travers, bien tant pis pour eux. Ces gens sont hors de la loi, monsieur Asselin. Bientôt, leur criminalité se déversera dans les rues, et les corps vont s'accumuler. Et en plus, j'ai raison de croire que les gens au sein de cette

administration, dont certains très haut rang, protègent ces-

ASSELIN

Vous m'accusez de corruption?

PAX

Ce n'est pas ce que j'ai-

ASSELIN

Vous accusez le maire, alors?

PAX

Non, je-

ASSELIN

J'en ai assez avec vos allégations sans fondement, Plante.

(Picks up his phone and begins to dial.)

Et je suis prêt à déposer un grief.

(Into receiver:)

Le bureau de Maire Houde, s'il vous plait.

(To PAX:)

Avez-vous autre chose à ajouter?

PAX

Non, monsieur.

ASSELIN

(Into receiver:)

Monsieur le Maire, bonjour. Bien, merci, et vous?

(To PAX:)

Alors, fichez le camp.

(PAX exits.)

ASSELIN

(Into receiver:)

Pardon? Ah, bien sûr. I will practice mine as well in that case. Yes, very useful for our future careers in Ottawa. Oh yes, an awful incident. Thank heavens there were no injuries and very little damage. Yes, we're getting to the bottom of it. No suspects yet, but we have a lead. Yes. Yes, I am also excited for the fight. I would say that Dubois's chances are very favourable. Oh, how much do you care to wager? Oh, very impressive. I'll take care of it. No problem. One thing more, Mr. Mayor. Plante was just here again. He and Drapeau are very persistent. No. No need to

worry. I very much doubt the depth of their case. In any event, Capitaine Taché is calling a press conference to announce the suspension with pay of ten or so of our police officers. Yes, good men, sir. That is why it is only a slap on the wrist. Yes, a slap on the wrist can go a long way, sir. And it shows the public that we are paying attention, sir. Yes, transparency and accountability are essential. Well, I thought only to keep you informed. Of course, that is why you pay me. No, I do not have any dogs. Yes, I am sure it is very adorable. Okay. Okay, well I must- Yes, the press conference, sir, I must listen to it. Yes, sir. Very good. See you then. Goodbye.

(ASSELIN hangs up. He pours himself a drink and turns on his radio. He leans back in his chair and relaxes. He changes the station from a baseball game to a news program.)

VOICE ON THE RADIO

-still hold no suspects in custody. Thanks to what appears to be very minute structural damage suffered from the blow, the city's firefighters have begun to pack up and leave the scene, leaving the police to start scattering the crowds of onlookers. You're listening to KRKD's Lunch Hour report and we turn now live, as promised, to city hall for the Chief of Police's emergency press conference. But first, a word from our sponsors. Did you know that Quebec Dairy Butter is the number one selling butter in the province? Yes, premium Quebec Butter is truly good butter. You see, Quebec Dairy Butter is salted by a special process to give you a mellowed sweet salty taste. Every single bar of Quebec Dairy Butter contains an appetizing invitation to enjoy a good hearty breakfast, the kind that nutritionists recommend. Start the day off right with Quebec Dairy Butter.

ACT 2

(The top floor of a gambling house. At the back of the room, downstage, are three doors, possibly closets, cabinets, or washrooms. At the center of the room is a table with two chairs. On the table are two telephones, one of which is unplugged from the wall. There is also a radio. Halfway between the table and the exit is a beautiful leather couch. Otherwise, the room is empty. As the scene opens, the connected phone begins to ring and continues for some time before JOE MILLER enters through the door at stage left. The room behind him is loud with shouting and laughter. JOE MILLER shuts the door and crosses to the table and chairs and answers the phone.)

JOE MILLER

Yeah. Yes. Okay. How long? Fine.

(He hangs up the phone, takes out his cigarettes and lights one. He walks to the door, opens it, and calls out.)

JOE MILLER

Quine! Quine, get in here.

(GORDIE QUINE enters.)

GORDIE QUINE

Yes, Mr. Miller.

JOE MILLER

Go tell Mr. Ship the call came in. Tell him we have about twenty minutes. Tell him I'm waiting here.

GORDIE QUINE

Yes, sir.

JOE MILLER

And tell Octave to cash out and get up here, too.

GORDIE QUINE

Yes, sir.

(GORDIE QUINE exits. JOE MILLER walks over to the radio and turns it on. He turns the dial from a news

program discussing the Mansfield Street explosion to a baseball game. He sits on the couch to listen for a moment. OCTAVE FRASER enters.)

OCTAVE FRASER

Y'ont du timing en ostie, ces cochons-là.

JOE MILLER

Don't waste your time trying to understand how a cop's brain works. It doesn't.

OCTAVE FRASER

I had a Straight flush, ostie. And the jackpot was at deux mille.

JOE MILLER

Sorry to hear that.

OCTAVE FRASER

Yes, sorry en ostie.

(OCTAVE FRASER crosses to the table and chairs and sits.)

OCTAVE FRASER

Eh, ben. What can you do, hein? That's the life.

JOE MILLER

That's the life.

OCTAVE FRASER

So... I heard some talk about some rumours tonight.

JOE MILLER

Is that so?

OCTAVE FRASER

Some whispers about you and Davis and a couple of Americans.

JOE MILLER

Let me guess: rumours about how my future don't look too bright.

OCTAVE FRASER

Something like that. Are they true?

JOE MILLER

I have no idea. That's the thing about rumours, isn't it?

OCTAVE FRASER

I guess so, Joe.

(OCTAVE FRASER takes out his cigarettes but cannot find his matches.)

OCTAVE FRASER

(Searching his pockets.)

Ben, voyons. Joe, you have a light?

(JOE MILLER takes out his lighter. OCTAVE FRASER gets up and walks towards him. JOE MILLER hands him his lighter. OCTAVE FRASER lights his cigarette and then admires the lighter.)

OCTAVE FRASER

(Handing the lighter back.)

Merci. That's a nice lighter. I've never seen one like that before. Where did you get it?

JOE MILLER

(Putting it back in his pocket.)

Germany.

OCTAVE FRASER

Eh boy, they make nice lighters in Germany. How much it cost you?

JOE MILLER

(He turns off the radio.)

Didn't cost me a thing.

OCTAVE FRASER

Ah, very good. Me, I always say, the best things in life are free. And if they aren't free, you take them anyways.

(OCTAVE FRASER returns to the table and sits.)

OCTAVE FRASER

Right?

(JOE MILLER doesn't answer. He puts his hands behind his head and leans back on the couch.)

OCTAVE FRASER

Hm. Is that it, Joe? Did you take something from the boss?

JOE MILLER

One, he ain't my boss, and two, I ain't done nothing.

OCTAVE FRASER

That's not what I hear.

JOE MILLER

Yeah? And what *did* you hear?

OCTAVE FRASER

Bof, all kinds of things, Joe.

JOE MILLER

Like what?

OCTAVE FRASER

Like maybe the fire at Davis's Metcalf operation was started with your German lighter, for one.

JOE MILLER

That's a big maybe, ain't it?

OCTAVE FRASER

Well, was it?

JOE MILLER

What do you think, Oc?

OCTAVE FRASER

Me, I think that if it was you, it is too bad you didn't finish the job *comme y' faut*, because now, as we say *en bon Français*, you're fucked.

JOE MILLER

Yeah. Well, I had nothing to do with it.

OCTAVE FRASER

Hm. In any case, you are probably fucked anyways, no?

JOE MILLER

Don't you have your own problems to worry about, Octave?

OCTAVE FRASER

Oh, sure, my wife's pain de viande¹ is a crime against humanity, but that is not a problem like yours, is it Joe?

JOE MILLER

I'll take care of my problems, don't you worry-

(HARRY SHIP enters through the door at stage left. The noise of laughter and shouting from without has subsided.)

HARRY SHIP

Our friends from the police sure have a sense of timing, don't they?

(He takes off his jacket and lays it on the couch.)

How long do we have?

JOE MILLER

(Standing)

By now, about fifteen minutes, I guess.

HARRY SHIP

Good. Let's get this over with. I want to get up and running as soon as possible.

JOE MILLER

Of course.

HARRY SHIP

Octave.

OCTAVE FRASER

Mr. Ship. How are you, sir?

HARRY SHIP

I have to say, Octave, that I'm irked.

OCTAVE FRASER

Irked, monsieur?

HARRY SHIP

Yes, I'm irked.

¹ Meat loaf

OCTAVE FRASER

I don't know this word, Mr. Ship.

HARRY SHIP

Tell Octave what irked means, Joe.

JOE MILLER

It means he's pissed.

OCTAVE FRASER

Ah, I see. And why, Mr. Ship?

HARRY SHIP

That's a good question, Octave. Thank you for asking. Why do you suppose I'm pissed, Joe?

JOE MILLER

You don't like the rainy weather?

OCTAVE FRASER

It's probably something to do with the rumours, Joe.

JOE MILLER

Yes, Octave, I realize that.

HARRY SHIP

I gotta say, Joe, you're batting for zero this week, aren't you?

JOE MILLER

How do you mean?

OCTAVE FRASER

He probably means the explosion, Joe.

JOE MILLER

I had nothing to do with that fire.

HARRY SHIP

Whether or not you started the fire is irrelevant at this point, Joe. It's your incendiary comments to Davis that I'm referring to, for starters. There is no denying your responsibility for that, is there?

JOE MILLER

To hell with Davis. He's got an attitude problem.

HARRY SHIP

Be that as it may, if there's anybody's ass in this city that you should be kissing, it's his.

OCTAVE FRASER

I wouldn't say no to a better attitude in general.

JOE MILLER

Would you shut your mouth already.

HARRY SHIP

I want you to apologize to him, Joe.

JOE MILLER

Forget it.

OCTAVE FRASER

Oh, it's not necessary, Mr. Ship.

JOE MILLER

For chrissake, Octave, he means to Davis, not to you, and I ain't apologizing to anybody.

HARRY SHIP

I'm not asking, Joe. If you don't, it will be me that kills you, not Davis's Yanks. Understood?

OCTAVE FRASER

(Turning away and sitting at the table.)

J'ai rien entendu, j'ai rien vu.

(OCTAVE picks up a newspaper and skims through.)

HARRY SHIP

Got it?

JOE MILLER

What do you want me to do?

HARRY SHIP

Nothing says I'm sorry like ten large.

JOE MILLER

Ten grand. Harry, you gotta' be kidding. What for?

HARRY SHIP

One, to let him know you are sorry for your sour attitude, and two, to ensure that he understands that I do not condone such behaviour from my guys.

JOE MILLER

Fine.

HARRY SHIP

Promise me, Joe.

JOE MILLER

I promise.

HARRY SHIP

Good. Now, when does our shipment come in?

JOE MILLER

Tonight, two o'clock. Five hundred cases of premium New Brunswick yellow margarine.

HARRY SHIP

Now you're starting to cheer me up. I want all the deliveries done before the weekend. Our Italian friends can't get enough of the stuff. I tell ya', the more things these hair-brained politicians make illegal, the richer I get.

JOE MILLER

Christ, if I had your scratch, I'd have a different car for everyday of the week.

HARRY SHIP

That's the difference between you and me. I'd rather have a judge for every day of the week.

JOE MILLER

Yeah, and what about mayors? Doesn't hurt to have one of those, does it?

HARRY SHIP

What are you trying to say?

JOE MILLER

You got a lot of friends, Harry.

HARRY SHIP

Why don't you just make your point.

JOE MILLER

Davis might be the boss, but this is your town Harry. Between your operation here, your casino, your clubs, the restaurant and the bookmaking, you've got cabbage comin' out of your ass. Not to mention the fights, the margarine, and the thousands you pick up gaming. What does Davis got? Some muscle and a heroin deal. I guess I'm wondering, with your friends, and with the cabbage you're pulling in here, and all the rest of it, well I guess I'm wondering why it is you're the one paying out to Davis when it should be the other way around.

HARRY SHIP

Well it ain't that way, Joe. It's the regular way. Davis's way.

JOE MILLER

To hell with Davis, he ain't worth his weight in horse manure, and I ain't the only one saying it. He's too big for his shoes. I hear it every night at the tables. And I don't just mean guys like Charlie, and Albert and Oscar. I'm talking City guys, St-James guys.

HARRY SHIP

(Takes out his cigarette case.)

You know what I think? I think you're sore because he won't let you run your own operation and I think you want to stick it to him. And I understand that. You go to him with a business plan, and he tells you where to go and how to get there. That kind of thing, it can bruise the ego, sure. But let me tell you, and I'm only going to tell you once: I'm not starting a war over this. I don't need it, and I don't want it.

JOE MILLER

(Lights HARRY SHIP's cigarette.)

Nobody wants a war. I'm saying it's about time you take what's practically yours already. Everybody and their mother knows it.

HARRY SHIP

Davis is Asselin's man and Davis isn't going anywhere.

JOE MILLER

All's I'm saying is if Davis suddenly found himself with a couple uncomfortable bullet holes in the back of his head, Asselin would have no one else to turn to but you.

HARRY SHIP

Are you saying you're going to kill Davis, Joe?

JOE MILLER

Did I say that? I never said that. Did you hear me say that, Oc?

OCTAVE FRASER

(Without looking away from the paper:)

Me? I wasn't listening, Joe.

JOE MILLER

You think me poor, but I'm trying to give you the world, Harry.

HARRY SHIP

You gonna kill him, Joe, or not?

JOE MILLER

Are you asking me to?

HARRY SHIP

If I wanted him dead, I sure as hell wouldn't be asking you to do it.

JOE MILLER

You saying I couldn't do it?

HARRY SHIP

I'm saying it wouldn't be a smart move. I'm saying half this city already thinks you tried to kill him last week, including Davis himself.

JOE MILLER

I already told you I had nothing to do with that fire.

HARRY SHIP

Doesn't matter. Davis thinks you did.

JOE MILLER

Davis can see it any way he wants. He's been looking for a reason to rub me out ever since I met him.

HARRY SHIP

Your attitude towards him doesn't help.

JOE MILLER

He was uncivil with me, Harry. What would you have me do?

HARRY SHIP

I'd have you refrain from telling him to fuck a dead relative.

OCTAVE FRASER

Ouf... Seigneur! P't'être tu ferais mieux de sacrer ton camp, le flo. Me, I've always dreamed of going to the Cantons de l'Est. A good place to retire, I think.

JOE MILLER

I ain't running. Not a chance. If he wants me dead, then he should'a shot me right then and there in his office when he turned me down for my operation.

OCTAVE FRASER

Bon...

JOE MILLER

In fact, I'm gonna ask him face to face if he plans on killing me.

HARRY SHIP

And do you think he'll answer you, Joe.

JOE MILLER

I figure that ten grand will at least buy me a straight answer.

(Knock from without. Enter GORDON QUINE.)

GORDIE QUINE

Mr. Ship, the Squad is here.

OCTAVE FRASER

Bon, enfin.

HARRY SHIP

Good. Send them up. I want to get the games up and rolling within an hour of the doors shutting behind them.

GORDIE QUINE

Sure thing, sir.

HARRY SHIP

Say, your jabs were looking terrific this morning, Gordie. I got a good feeling about your fight.

GORDIE QUINE

Thank you, sir.

HARRY SHIP

That St-Henri boy has nothing on you. Your feet are faster, your jabs are faster, and you're much prettier, too.

GORDIE QUINE

It won't last longer than three rounds, Mr. Ship, I'm sure of it.

HARRY SHIP

That's what I want to hear. I want to see a return on my investment.

GORDIE QUINE

Your investment, sir?

HARRY SHIP

You, Gordie. I've put a lot of time and money into you.

GORDIE QUINE

Oh, yes, of course.

HARRY SHIP

You'll have this city by the scrotum. Trust me.

GORDIE QUINE

Okay.

HARRY SHIP

Okay, send them up.

GORDIE QUINE

Yes sir, Mr. Ship.

(GORDIE QUINE exits.)

JOE MILLER

Kind of thick, isn't he.

HARRY SHIP

Yeah, well, as long as he can hit hard. His bloody trainers aren't exactly cheap.

JOE MILLER

I'm going to go grab a drink. I'll let you know how my meeting with Davis goes.

HARRY SHIP

Hold on now. What the hell are you going to do once you get there, Joe?

JOE MILLER

I'm going to try to have a civil conversation with him.

HARRY SHIP

Don't be smart with me. I'm trying to help you out here and you're making it very difficult by being smart.

JOE MILLER

You know it as well as I do, Harry. He's not stable. I'm not saying I'm gonna kill him, but somebody should, and soon.

HARRY SHIP

Keep your voice down. We don't need the Squad walking in on one your tirades. This is too small a town for your big mouth to handle.

JOE MILLER

I'm serious Harry. Time's gonna come when he's gonna take his piece, Harry. Not ask for it, take it. And you can bet the bank on that.

(Enter CPT. TACHÉ and members of the Morality Squad, OFFICERS FLANNERY & QUINE.)

CPT. TACHÉ

Mr. Ship, how do you do?

HARRY SHIP

Captain, I was starting to think that you changed your mind about this whole raid business.

CPT. TACHÉ

The ladies downstairs are beautiful. I couldn't help but get distracted for a moment or two. Since when do you allow women in the gaming room? It was my understanding that women were forbidden in these establishments.

HARRY SHIP

They're employees. They serve cigarettes and drinks and such.

CPT. TACHÉ

I hope they are no more than waitresses, Mr. Ship. We wouldn't want any unnecessary complications would we?

HARRY SHIP

Of course not. Everybody knows prostitution is illegal in this city. But you know as well as I that when your bosses shut down all of the hen houses, well we couldn't very well turn all those ladies to the streets, could we?

CPT. TACHÉ

Harry Ship the Philanthropist. Perhaps there is a future for you in politics, Monsieur.

HARRY SHIP

I prefer to make my living honestly. And if I can help out a few reformed ladies, why not?

OFFICER KELLS

Ah! I thought I recognized that brunette.

OFFICER FLANNERY

It was her small hands that you recognized.

OFFICER KELLS

I do love a woman with small hands.

HARRY SHIP

Who doesn't.

(They laugh.)

CPT. TACHÉ

Mr. Miller, I have to say, I'm surprised to see you here.

JOE MILLER

Well you'll be plenty surprised when I wipe that pea soup smile off of your face. Sorry, Oc.

OCTAVE FRASER

Me? I wasn't listening.

CPT. TACHÉ

Please, Mr. Miller, don't be angry with me. It is no fault of mine that you cannot control that mouth of yours.

JOE MILLER

I can control it fine when it's working your wife.

CPT. TACHÉ

I wonder how smart your mouth will be when it is full of dirt, Mr. Miller.

OFFICER FLANNERY

I had a cousin who didn't watch what he said, and he ended up with two holes in the back of his head.

OFFICER KELLS

Killed himself, they say. A what do ya' call it: one of them suicide deals.

JOE MILLER

You know, I ain't much for gambling, but if I were, I'd wager that ain't nobody is gonna put a hole in my head.

CPT. TACHÉ

For a man of your profession, Mr. Miller, a bullet in the brain is what one would call a best-case scenario.

HARRY SHIP

Do you gentlemen mind if we get rolling here? I have a business to run.

CTP. TACHÉ

Absolutely. I too must hurry. Tonight, Madame and I have bingo. Me, I prefer a good game of barbotte², but for her, it is the bingo.

² Popular high stakes dice game unique to Montreal.

HARRY SHIP

You come by any time you want, Captain. We'll keep your spot clear and have a gin and tonic waiting for you, if I'm not mistaken.

CPT. TACHÉ

Very good, Mr. Ship. Very good.

JOE MILLER

Harry, I gotta go get started on those errands we were talkin' about.

HARRY SHIP

Yes, of course. Just make sure to watch your mouth, will ya'?

(JOE MILLER walks towards the door, but CPT. TACHÉ and the SQUAD are blocking the way out.)

JOE MILLER

I took down Gerries a lot bigger and meaner'n you, Taché. Don't make me exert myself.

CPT. TACHÉ

Have a beautiful evening, Mr. Miller. It was so nice to know you, though I cannot say that I will miss your sunny disposition.

JOE MILLER

(Spits on CPT. TACHÉ's badge.)

Something to remember me by, pally.

(JOE MILLER forces his way through the two officers and exits.)

CPT. TACHÉ

(Wiping off the spit.)

Charming, isn't he.

(To SQUAD:)

Bon, Messieurs, vous êtes prêts?

OFFICERS FLANNERY & KELLS

Yes, sir.

CPT. TACHÉ

Mr. Fraser, comment-allez vous ce soir?

OCTAVE FRASER

Bof, ça va, ça va. Et vous Monsieur le Capitaine?

CPT. TACHÉ

Ça va, absolument. Oui ça va très bien, merci. Et votre femme, ma cousine Jacynthe.

OCTAVE FRASER

Moins jolie qu'il y a vingt ans.

CPT. TACHÉ

Mais aussi autoritaire, je vous parie.

OCTAVE FRASER

Seigneur que oui.

CPT. TACHÉ

Croyez moi, je vous comprends, c'est de parenté. Ma mère, mes soeurs, elles sont toutes pareilles.

(To SQUAD:)

Messieurs, donnez-lui les menottes qu'il s'attache.

OFFICER KELLS

Here ya go, sir.

OCTAVE FRASER

Merci.

(OCTAVE FRASER cuffs himself and stands.)

CPT. TACHÉ

By the way, I should mention that there will be a change in protocol tonight.

HARRY SHIP

What do you mean by change in protocol?

CPT. TACHÉ

Surely you have heard of these two tireless lawyers looking to cleanse the city of crime.

HARRY SHIP

What about them?

CPT. TACHÉ

Maître Plante et Maître Drapeau. Montréal's White Knights, it would seem. They are on a mission.

HARRY SHIP

And?

CPT. TACHÉ

Mr. Asselin thought it advisable to cover all of our bases on account of these two new lawyers who have been asking a lot of questions. For that reason, we are going to keep Mr. Fraser with us overnight in order to alleviate any suspicious eyes and ears down at the precinct.

HARRY SHIP

And why wasn't I notified any earlier?

CPT. TACHÉ

You never know who is listening, Mr. Ship

OCTAVE FRASER

Bon. Va falloir que j'passe la nuit avec les ivrognes?

CPT. TACHÉ

Not to worry. It will all be taken care of soon enough. I assure you Octave, you will not have to spend too many nights like this. These are only temporary precautions.

OCTAVE FRASER

Pis ma femme? What am I supposed to tell her, ein? Sorry chérie, couldn't come home last night, I was in jail?

CPT. TACHÉ

Would you rather I tell her you were out gambling with whores all night?

OCTAVE FRASER

Bof, you tell her that and I might as well stay in there all year.

HARRY SHIP

We'll have this thing sorted out quick enough. Lawyers are like cockroaches; you just have to remind them who turns the lights on and off.

CPT. TACHÉ

Bon, Messieurs. Allons-y. La porte, s'il vous plait.

(OFFICER KELLS moves to one of the dummy doors and sets a padlock.)

HARRY SHIP

Looks like you got yourself some overtime, Octave.

OCTAVE FRASER

Je fais ma job, pis j'me ferme la yeule. Ça fait ben mon affaire.

CPT. TACHÉ

Loyal employees are invaluable, are they not Mr. Ship?

HARRY SHIP

I'd be nowhere without them. Say, what will the headline be tomorrow?

CPT. TACHÉ

Oh, you know, the usual: "Barbotte Game Busted. Suspect Arrested. Important Equipment Confiscated." Or such and such.

HARRY SHIP

How about: "Snake eyes cast on Barbotte Game: Valuable Equipment Seized."

CPT. TACHÉ

Very good, Mr. Ship. Poetic.

(To SQUAD:)

Allez!

(SQUAD leads OCTAVE FRASER to the door.)

HARRY SHIP

Have a good night, Oc.

OCTAVE FRASER

Bof, maybe this jail will change my luck. It makes eight months now I make only two, maybe three hundred a night.

HARRY SHIP

Officers, the valuable equipment.

OFFICER KELLS

Right!

(OFFICER KELLS moves towards the unplugged telephone on the table.)

OCTAVE FRASER

(While the equipment is being seized.)

You know how long it last three hundred dollars in my house? Do they come home and start paying right away to not one, Joe, not two, but six daughter? That's fourteen hands going through my jacket when I walk into my house. That's seventy fingers in my pants when I take a shower. M'a t'dire une affaire, trois cent piastres, tu vas voir que ça va vite.

OFFICER KELLS

Equipment seized!

CPT. TACHÉ

Messieurs, descendez avec Mr. Fraser. Je vous joindrai à la voiture.

OFFICERS FLANNERY & KELLS

Oui, Monsieur.

(OFFICERS FLANNERY & KELLS and OCTAVE FRASER exit through the door at stage left.)

CPT. TACHÉ

Mr. Ship, may we have a word before I go?

HARRY SHIP

About?

CPT. TACHÉ

Business is good, I hear.

HARRY SHIP

Cut to the chase, Taché. How much?

CPT. TACHÉ

You are right. Enough small talk for one night. Yes?

HARRY SHIP

Yes. Which one of your bosses wants some more of my money.

CPT. TACHÉ

It is not a matter of how much more or less money. Mr. Davis is happy to see that you are doing well, for it means that he, as well, is doing well.

HARRY SHIP

What is it then?

CPT. TACHÉ

Mr. Asselin has a lot of money on your boy's upcoming boxing match.

HARRY SHIP

As he should. Gordie is champion in the making.

CPT. TACHÉ

That may be, but Mr. Asselin, he believes in the St-Henri boy.

HARRY SHIP

Absolutely not.

CPT. TACHÉ

I haven't made my proposition yet, Mr. Ship.

HARRY SHIP

You want my boy to throw the fight, is that it?

CPT. TACHÉ

I want you to ensure a victory for Mr. Asselin.

HARRY SHIP

Well you can tell him to forget it. I might be a degenerate gambler, but I'm no cheat.

CPT. TACHÉ

Please, consider it for a moment before you so fiercely refuse. My bosses, as you say, don't take disappointment very well.

HARRY SHIP

If Asselin wants a sure bet, tell him to bet on my kid. Otherwise, forget it.

CPT. TACHÉ
Are you certain, Mr. Ship?

HARRY SHIP
Absolutely.

CPT. TACHÉ
Very well. We'll be seeing each again soon, I am sure. Au revoir Mr. Ship.

HARRY SHIP
Yeah, see ya.

(CPT. TACHÉ exits. HARRY SHIP walks to the table and turns the radio on to the baseball game. He switches to another station.)

VOICE ON THE RADIO:
We'll get back to our program in just a moment. But first, a suggestion: "Grocers all across the province recommend Québec Dairy Butter for all your daily cooking. Whether it is for your ham sandwich, on a fresh baked muffin, or for getting that pesky wedding ring off, there is nothing better than Québec Dairy Butter. You'll love the delicate fragrance it leaves on your skin. Mmmmm delicious. Nothing beats Québec Dairy Butter."

(Lights Fade.)

ACT 3, Scene 1

(La Bolduc's "Ca va v'nir Découragez-vous pas" plays into Act 3. Lights rise on an office much like HARRY SHIP's, but decorated less extravagantly. At the back of the room are chalkboards with results from races from Montreal to San Fransisco, as well as the scores of baseball games and boxing matches. Gordie Quine is thrown through the door of the office and lands on his face. He is disheveled and roughed up. OFFICERS FLANNERY & KELLS enter.)

OFFICER KELLS

See. Like that.

OFFICER FLANNERY

No, no, no. You don't start with the head.

OFFICER KELLS

What are you talking about?

OFFICER FLANNERY

No, listen.

(GORDIE QUINE moans/coughs)

OFFICER KELLS

Quiet, boy.

OFFICER FLANNERY

You start with the head and they get dizzy, they stop listening. You need them to listen. Hey.

(Grabs GORDIE QUINE by the hair.)

Are you listening?

(GORDIE QUINE moans.)

OFFICER FLANNERY

How's your training going, tough guy? You gonna be ready for Saturday? Kells, who's that other kid? The Frenchman?

OFFICER KELLS

Dubois.

OFFICER FLANNERY

That's the one, Dubois. You ready for Dubois, boy?

(GORDIE QUINE tries to say something, but OFFICER KELLS's nightstick is still firmly at his throat.)

OFFICER KELLS

Have some manners, will ya. You're being spoken to.

GORDIE QUINE

What?

OFFICER FLANNERY

Ya' see, he's all confused. He doesn't know his ass from his elbow. Hey, listen. I thought you were supposed to be some what d'ya call it. A tough guy.

OFFICER KELLS

Get to your feet, boy.

GORDIE QUINE

I don't understand.

OFFICE KELLS

Shut yer trap.

OFFICE FLANNERY

Ya don't look like a tough guy to me.

GORDIE QUINE

Am I under arrest?

(GORDIE QUINE begins to get himself up off the floor, but before he can OFFICER KELLS hits him with his nightstick. OFFICER FLANNERY begins to laugh and OFFICER KELLS chuckles.)

OFFICER KELLS

Stay down, you mutt.

OFFICER FLANNERY

You see, you warm yourself up for the head. You don't start with it. You build towards it.

(The officers pick GORDIE QUINE up and drag him to the chair. OFFICER KELLS sticks his nightstick on

GORDIE QUINE's throat. They sit him down on a chair.)

OFFICER FLANNERY

Speak up, boy.

(OFFICER KELLS relaxes his grip but remains standing behind GORDIE QUINE.)

OFFICER FLANNERY

Are you ready for the fight, or not?

GORDIE QUINE

Yeah. Yes, I'm ready.

OFFICER FLANNERY

That's good to hear.

GORDIE QUINE

What are you arresting me for?

OFFICER FLANNERY

What makes you think you're under arrest? You feeling guilty about something, boyo? Do ya have something you wanna get off of your chest?

GORDIE QUINE

You don't have anything on me do you?

OFFICER KELLS

We have what we need, rest assured, Mr Quine.

GORDIE QUINE

You rotten bastards. I know my rights. You've got nothing to keep me here.

(GORDIE QUINE starts to get up. OFFICER KELLS intervenes but GORDIE QUINE elbows him in the face. GORDIE QUINE turns to OFFICER FLANNERY who takes a step back as QUINE prepares to lunge forward, but OFFICER KELLS hits him in the back with his nightstick and nails him to the desk. OFFICER FLANNERY takes out his gun and puts it in front of GORDIE QUINE on the desk.)

OFFICER FLANNERY

We've got the law to keep you here, son.

(OFFICER FLANNERY puts the gun in GORDIE QUINE's mouth.)

OFFICER KELLS
Do you understand?

GORDIE QUINE
Yes.

OFFICER FLANNERY
Yes, what?

GORDIE QUINE
Yes, yes I understand.

OFFICER FLANNERY
Good

(OFFICER FLANNERY puts away his gun. OFFICER KELLS sits GORDIE QUINE back down.)

OFFICER FLANNERY
Now sit quietly like a good boy.

(OFFICER FLANNERY turns the radio on to a baseball game.)

OFFICER FLANNERY
And listen to the ball game with us.

(They listen quietly for a few moments.)

OFFICER KELLS
Hey, so, what do ya' call Jewish wine?

(GORDIE QUINE makes no reply.)

OFFICER FLANNERY
You don't like jokes, boyo? Ask him again.

OFFICER KELLS
What do ya' call Jewish wine?

(GORDIE QUINE still does not answer. OFFICER FLANNERY starts to raise his nightstick.)

GORDIE QUINE
Okay, okay. What do you call it?

OFFICER KELLS
(In a whining pitch:)
I wanna go to Florida.

(OFFICERS FLANNERY and KELLS break into laughter. HARRY DAVIS enters. OFFICER FLANNERY sees him and stops laughing. OFFICER KELLS continues. HARRY DAVIS starts clapping.)

HARRY DAVIS
What a riot you are, lieutenant. Really.

OFFICER KELLS
(Turning to DAVIS.)
I meant no offense by it, sir. It was only a joke.

(HARRY DAVIS walks up to him)

HARRY DAVIS
Am I paying you to tell jokes?

OFFICER KELLS
No sir, I don't believe you are.

HARRY DAVIS
Then keep your mick mouth shut.

OFFICER KELLS
Of course.

HARRY DAVIS
Well, if it isn't Gordie Quine, the pride of the Pointe.
How do you do, son?

GORDIE QUINE
Hello, Mr. Davis.

HARRY DAVIS
So you know who I am then?

GORDIE QUINE
Everybody knows who you are, sir.

(HARRY DAVIS sits at his desk.)

HARRY DAVIS

Good. We can skip the formalities. I hate formalities. So, why do you think you're here?

GORDIE QUINE

I don't know, sir.

HARRY DAVIS

You don't?

OFFICER FLANNERY

He's a tad lame in the head, Mr. Davis.

OFFICER KELLS

Not the sharpest tool, he is.

HARRY DAVIS

Good. Gives us the opportunity to educate him, doesn't it?

GORDIE QUINE

Educate me for what?

HARRY DAVIS

Do you know the tale of The Traveler and Fortune?

GORDIE QUINE

No, I don't think so.

(HARRY DAVIS takes out a cigar and his cigar cutter.)

HARRY DAVIS

A traveler exhausted from a long journey lay down on the edge of a deep well. Just as he was about to fall into the water, Lady Fortune appeared to him and waking him from his sleep said to him: "Good Sir, wake up: if you fall into the well, the blame will be thrown on me, and my name won't be worth nothing among mortals; for I find that men can't help but blame me for their problems, even if their own ignorance has really brought it on themselves."

OFFICER KELLS

Well said, sir.

HARRY DAVIS

Shut yer mick mouth. Your fight this weekend. How do you think you're gonna do?

GORDIE QUINE

I'm gonna work his body, sir. I'm gonna wear him out and leave the Forum with the title fight.

HARRY DAVIS

I admire your conviction boy. But you weren't listening to my story. Winning is relative. And five large is better than any belt I've ever heard of. How about you?

GORDIE QUINE

What do you mean?

OFFICER FLANNERY

I told you he was lame, sir.

HARRY DAVIS

Did I ask for your input, you spudsucker? I've got a lot of scratch on your big fight son. And though I support your strategy, something in my bones tells me the St-Henri boy is gonna win.

GORDIE QUINE

No he won't; he's too slow; he's out of shape. I'm gonna-

HARRY DAVIS

(Cuts the end of his cigar with the cutter.)

I'm not mistaken very often. The St-Henri boy is gonna win. By knock out, in the 5th round.

GORDIE QUINE

What-

(HARRY DAVIS makes a sign to OFFICER KELLS, who then slams GORDIE QUINE's head onto the desk, and keeps him there with his nightstick on the back of his neck.)

HARRY DAVIS

Dubois knocks you out in the 5th. You understand?

GORDIE QUINE

But Mr. Ship-

HARRY DAVIS

Forget Ship. He's out of the picture. You go down in the 5th, or I'll cut each of your fingers off one at a time and never mind boxing, you won't even be able to wipe your own ass. And if that doesn't do it for you, I'll do the same to your mick mother, your mick father, and your little paddy sister, too.

OFFICER KELLS

(Throwing him back into the chair and holding the nightstick against his throat.)

Tell him ya understand. Don't be prideful now.

OFFICER FLANNERY

Don't be stupid. Think about yer career.

(OFFICER FLANNERY jabs GORDIE QUINE in the stomach with his nightstick.)

GORDIE QUINE

I understand. I understand.

(HARRY DAVIS makes a sign; OFFICERS KELLS and FLANNERY release him.)

HARRY DAVIS

Good. I'm glad we could come to an agreement.

(He takes out an envelope and hands it to GORDIE QUINE.)

Take it. You get twice as much after the fight, for your troubles. Now get out. I have appointments to respect.

GORDIE QUINE

What about Mr. Ship?

HARRY DAVIS

Ship doesn't concern you.

(LOUIS GRECO enters.)

LOUIS GRECO

Miller is here.

HARRY DAVIS

You're kidding. What does he want?

LOUIS GRECO

I don't know. He hasn't come in yet. He's pacing out front.

HARRY DAVIS

Of course he is. Stupid bastard. Is anyone with him?

LOUIS GRECO

Don't think so. Want me to send someone out there to take care of him?

HARRY DAVIS

Nah, don't worry about him. The boys from New York will be here tomorrow. I don't want to have them come all the way here and pay them for nothing.

LOUIS GRECO

Whatever you say.

HARRY DAVIS

(To the OFFICERS:)

Why don't you two make sure the Pride of the Point here gets home safe.

OFFICERS FLANNER & KELLS

Yes, sir.

HARRY DAVIS

And Gordie, don't let me down.

(They exit. LOUIS GRECO goes to follow.)

HARRY DAVIS

Louis.

LOUIS GRECO

Yeah?

HARRY DAVIS

After this thing with Ship and Miller, we're gonna have to take care of those two lawyers once and for all.

LOUIS GRECO

Sure. How?

HARRY DAVIS

Your choice. But it can't look like a hit. Asselin doesn't want it to be front-page news.

LOUIS GRECO

Of course.

HARRY DAVIS

Strong-headed Frenchmen is all they are.

LOUIS GRECO

I'll keep an eye on them. I'm thinking maybe they get into a car accident.

HARRY DAVIS

Your foresight is incredible, Louis.

(JOE MILLER enters.)

JOE MILLER

Harry, Louis.

HARRY DAVIS

Joe.

LOUIS GRECO

How ya' doin'?

HARRY DAVIS

What, you can't knock all of a sudden?

JOE MILLER

I'm not here to cause any trouble, Harry. I just wanna talk.

LOUIS GRECO

Then you should make an appointment like everybody else. Harry's a busy man, Joe-

HARRY DAVIS

Don't worry about it, Louis. I can make time for an old friend like Joe. We're old friends, aren't we, Joe?

JOE MILLER

Sure.

(LOUIS GRECO exits.)

HARRY DAVIS

What can I do for you, Joe?

JOE MILLER

Have you heard the rumours?

HARRY DAVIS

You'll have to be more specific, Joe. All manner of people come through here with all kinds of different tales. It's hard to keep track.

JOE MILLER

The rumours about me being responsible for the explosion.

HARRY DAVIS

Ah yes, those rumours. Yes, I have. They're all over town.

JOE MILLER

And do you believe them?

HARRY DAVIS

They're hard to ignore, aren't they?

JOE MILLER

I had nothing to do with that whole thing. I was nowhere near your joint that night.

HARRY DAVIS

I find that hard to believe.

JOE MILLER

(Hands him an envelope.)

This might help.

HARRY DAVIS

What's this?

JOE MILLER

An olive branch.

HARRY DAVIS

Is that supposed to mean something to me, Joe?

JOE MILLER

I came here to make things right. For the greater good and all that.

HARRY DAVIS

Make what things right, Joe? I've known you a long time, I've heard you say, and seen you do, a lot of stupid things. Not that I hold grudges, of course, but maybe you can refresh my memory.

JOE MILLER

The other night, Harry. I crossed the line. I shouldn't have said what I said.

HARRY DAVIS

C'mon, Joe, don't you know I am a man of principle? I'm hurt. It's going to take more than, what is this, about ten grand? It's going to take more than ten grand for you to bring holy peace, and beg the king's relief. I'd appreciate a little more sincerity, all things considered.

JOE MILLER

Perhaps my comments were needlessly slanderous. I apologize.

HARRY DAVIS

My poor mother, rest her soul. What else?

JOE MILLER

What do you mean what else? That's it.

HARRY DAVIS

What have we learned from this, Joe? What can you apply towards your future actions, for the greater good, and all that?

JOE MILLER

I was out of line. My temper got the best of me.

HARRY DAVIS

Sure. You're emotional, like a broad. I know that. You've always been a bit feminine, haven't ya'. In your manners, I mean. I'm surprised they even let you enlist. Guess they were short on men. What, were you the nurse or something? Eh? Did ya' make the soldiers' beds, stuff of that nature? Tell me Joe, what did ya' do over there?

JOE MILLER

I guess I stayed out of the way.

HARRY DAVIS

Too bad you didn't keep staying out of the way, Joe. We could have avoided this whole mess.

JOE MILLER

Yeah, too bad. So how about the other rumour then?

HARRY DAVIS

Boy, you sure are a gossip queen, aren't you? How many rumours are we gonna have to go through like this?

JOE MILLER

Just the ones concerning you, the two yanks, and myself.

HARRY DAVIS

What do you mean?

JOE MILLER

I mean the target that you may or may not have put on my back.

(Beat.)

HARRY DAVIS

You don't expect me to answer that.

JOE MILLER

I don't expect you to answer it if it's true, but if it ain't, you can answer, and it's possible it ain't true.

HARRY DAVIS

Anything is possible, I guess.

JOE MILLER

Well?

(HARRY DAVIS smokes his cigar for a few moments.)

HARRY DAVIS

This is too big for you to buck.

JOE MILLER

I know how big it is, and I ain't bucking anything.

HARRY DAVIS

(Pulling out a chair.)

Joseph. Why don't you sit down, I'll tell you a tale.

(Walking around to his desk and sitting.)
Do you know the story of the Ass in Lion's skin?

JOE MILLER
Can't say that I do.

HARRY DAVIS
One day, an Ass, having put on Lion's skin, strolled about the forest and amused himself by frightening all the foolish animals he ran into. At last coming across a Fox, he tried to frighten him also, but the Fox no sooner heard the sound of his voice than he exclaimed, "I might possibly have been frightened, if I hadn't heard your bray." Do you get my meaning, Joe? It's too big to buck, and you can be handled just as easily as anybody else. This is my town, you get that?

JOE MILLER
I won't be so damn easy, you hear? I won't be so damn easy to handle and you can tell that to your American friends.

HARRY DAVIS
We'll see about that.

JOE MILLER
If you had any brains you would kill me yourself, because I promise you, ff it turns out those Americans really are coming after me, you'll be getting their teeth in the post, and then their eyes, and then you'll be seeing me again, and I'll be showing up with something a little bigger than an olive branch. So you just sit there with your parables, smiling like an idiot and waiting for your Yank friends to do what you can't.

(Beat.)

JOE MILLER
Te bat de te caci pe tine, dobitoc.³

HARRY DAVIS
I will not have to wait for anyone from New York.

(HARRY DAVIS pulls out a heater from his desk. JOE MILLER lunges forward and takes hold of the muzzle.)

³ Romanian for "I'm going to beat you until you shit your pants, stupid farm animal."

They struggle, throw punches. JOE MILLER manages to take out his own heater. They continue to fight. A shot is heard, then two more. HARRY DAVIS falls dead over his desk. JOE MILLER takes the envelope and puts it in his jacket. He takes the other heater. He is still holding his own. He turns to leave, but LOUIS GRECO enters.)

JOE MILLER

(Pointing both heaters at him.)

Hold it.

LOUIS GRECO

(Putting his hands in the air.)

What are you thinking, Joe?

JOE MILLER

I'm thinking I shut him up.

LOUIS GRECO

Stupid move, Joe, very stupid move.

JOE MILLER

It was me or him, Louis. Give me your heater. C'mon.

LOUIS GRECO

(Handing over his heater.)

You ain't gonna get very far.

JOE MILLER

Harry said something along those lines before I shot him.

LOUIS GRECO

Alright, take it easy, take it easy.

JOE MILLER

Say, that's a nice suit you have on. Why don't you take it off.

LOUIS GRECO

What are you talking about?

JOE MILLER

I said you have a nice suit, and I don't want to get any blood on it.

LOUIS GRECO
Have you completely lost it?

JOE MILLER
Take it off.

LOUIS GRECO
Alright, alright.
(*LOUIS GRECO undresses.*)
It's coming off. Its yours.

JOE MILLER
Good. Now get on your knees.

LOUIS GRECO
We can discuss this, Joe. You don't have to do this.

JOE MILLER
Get on your knees and put your hands behind your head,
Louis.

LOUIS GRECO
(*Kneeling.*)
Okay. I got it.

JOE MILLER
Close your eyes.

LOUIS PRETROLLO
Don't do this, Joe. I'm begging you.

JOE MILLER
(*Putting one of the guns in his waist.*)
Do you have kids, Louis.

LOUIS GRECO
No, I don't.

JOE MILLER
(*Putting the gun to LOUIS GRECO's head.*)
Then shut your mouth and close your eyes.

LOUIS GRECO
Okay, okay. Just think about this. There ain't no problem
between you and me. We can all just walk away from this.
Move on, you know, get on with our lives.

(JOE MILLER takes the suit off the floor and exits.)
You want your game house? Go for it, who is stopping you
now? C'mon, let's just move on, Joe. Can we please do that?
Let's just move on, Joe. Forget about the whole thing, put
it behind us. Can we just do that Joe?

(Black.)

ACT 4, Scene 1

(OCTAVE FRASER is in his cell, sitting quietly. After a while OFFICER FLANNERY enters and unlocks the door and lets him out.)

OFFICER FLANNERY

You'll never guess. Ya made bail, old boy.

OCTAVE FRASER

I must have a guardian angel.

OFFICER FLANNERY

Sorry we left you in for so long, it's gotten a little mad around here.

OCTAVE FRASER

Yes, I've noticed. Has the King made a surprise visit?

OFFICER FLANNERY

Harry Davis was shot dead last night. Three times, one in the head and two in the heart.

OCTAVE FRASER

Seigneur! What happened? Who shot him?

OFFICER FLANNERY

We have twenty witnesses say they saw Joe Miller walk into Davis's office. Ten minutes later three shots were fired and Miller had disappeared.

OCTAVE FRASER

Oh, Joe. Where is he now?

OFFICER FLANNERY

He's vanished. But we'll find him. Anyways, someone will let you know when your ride arrives. I have to run, Asselin is in a rage. See ya, Oc.

OCTAVE FRASER

Au revoir.

(OCTAVE FRASER walks out of the cell and sits on a bench. OFFICER FLANNERY exits. After some time PAX enters and walks towards him.)

PAX

Excusez-moi, monsieur, pourriez-vous me dire quelle heure il est?

OCTAVE FRASER

Selon l'horloge devant vous, il est dix heures moins quart.

PAX

Ah, bien sûr. Avec tout le temps que je passe ici, j'aurais dû me souvenir de l'horloge.

OCTAVE FRASER

Parfois les choses qui sont juste en face de nous sont les plus difficiles à voir.

PAX

Ah oui, bien dit.

(Beat.)

Vous semblez très familier. Vous aussi vous passez beaucoup de temps ici?

OCTAVE FRASER

Non, pas trop.

PAX

Je suis sûr de vous avoir vu ici il y a quelques semaines.

OCTAVE FRASER

Une couple de semaines? Ah, oui. J'avais perdu mon portefeuille. Un bon samaritain l'avait amené ici. Personne n'avait pris de l'argent. La bonté des gens peut vous surprendre parfois.

PAX

Oui, surtout de nos jours. Vous avez entendu parler de l'assassinat de Harry Davis?

OCTAVE FRASER

Oui. Affreux.

PAX

Eh bien, il a mené une vie dangereuse. C'est à prévoir.

OCTAVE FRASER

Peut-être. Mais à ma connaissance, ou du moins de ce que j'ai lu dans les journaux, monsieur Davis s'est marié récemment. Sa pauvre femme doit être affolée.

PAX

Oui. Mes prières sont avec elle. Que savez-vous d'autre de M. Davis? De ce que vous avez lu dans les journaux, bien sûr.

OCTAVE FRASER

Pas grand chose. Seulement qu'il est, était plutôt, un passionné de la boxe. Ils en parlaient toujours à la radio, lors des combats.

PAX

Ah, oui.

OCTAVE FRASER

Pourquoi me demandez-vous ça?

PAX

Juste pour faire passer le temps. Je ne vous ennuie pas, j'espère?

OCTAVE FRASER

Du tout.

PAX

Au juste, pourquoi êtes-vous ici si tôt?

OCTAVE FRASER

Vous ne me croiriez pas si je vous disais.

PAX

Dite-le moi tout de même.

OCTAVE FRASER

Eh bien, j'ai été faire une promenade après le déjeuner, afin d'échapper à ma femme pour quelques instants, vous comprenez.

PAX

Oh oui.

OCTAVE FRASER

Eh bien, je marchais et je suis tombé sur un portefeuille perdu. Alors, je l'ai amené ici pour qu'il puisse être retourné à son propriétaire.

PAX

Voyons.

OCTAVE FRASER

Le hasard, monsieur, fait de bien belles choses!

PAX

Et maintenant?

OCTAVE FRASER

J'ai trop mal au pieds pour rentrer chez moi. Alors j'attends que ma femme vienne me chercher.

PAX

Un service en vaut un autre, hein?

OCTAVE FRASER

C'est en plein ça.

PAX

Qui pensez-vous va remplacer le chef de la pègre, maintenant que Davis est décédé?

OCTAVE FRASER

Oh, je ne sais pas. Je préfère les sports.

PAX

Alors, le nom Harry Ship ne vous dit rien?

OCTAVE FRASER

Il est le nouveau gérant du Canadien, non?

PAX

Non, il est plutôt du monde de la boxe.

OCTAVE FRASER

Bien sûr! Le promoteur.

PAX

Donc, vous avez entendu parler de lui?

OCTAVE FRASER

J'ai entendu parler de ses combattants. Des gars vicieux avec des pieds rapides.

PAX

Rien d'autre?

OCTAVE FRASER

À propos de Harry Ship? Je pense qu'il a un restaurant, aussi. Mais ce n'est pas à mon goût. Non, mon épouse et moi, nous aimons garder les choses simples. Rien d'exceptionnel. Mais vous, vous devriez y aller. C'est un restaurant pour les avocats.

PAX

Pardon?

OCTAVE FRASER

Je veux dire les gens avec de l'argent.

PAX

Oui, mais ce qui vous fait penser que je suis un avocat?

OCTAVE FRASER

Parce que vous l'êtes.

(OFFICER KELLS enters unnoticed.)

PAX

Comment avez-vous deviné?

OCTAVE FRASER

Je suis simple, maître, mais je ne suis pas stupide. Je crois que je vais aller attendre mon épouse à l'extérieur.

PAX

Laissez-moi vous donner ma carte, au cas où un jour vous avez besoin de moi.

OCTAVE FRASER

Merci. Un plaisir de faire votre connaissance,, Maître Plante.

PAX

Oui, pareillement.

(PAX & OCTAVE FRASER shake hands.)

OFFICER KELLS
(Stepping forward:)
Mr. Fraser, your ride is here.

OCTAVE FRASER
Oh. Thank you officer. Au revoir Maître Plante.

PAX
Au revoir.

(OCTAVE FRASER exits.)

OFFICER KELLS
Is he a client, sir?

PAX
What? Oh, no. More of an acquaintance, I would say.

OFFICER KELLS
I see.

PAX
And how do you know him?

OFFICER KELLS
I don't, really.

(OFFICER KELLS exits from where he entered. PAX exits the opposite side. A phone begins to ring.)

Scene 2

(Top floor of HARRY SHIP's Game House. HARRY SHIP enters, holding a newspaper. He moves to the wooden table and answers the ringing phone.)

HARRY SHIP
Yeah.

(No answer.)

HARRY SHIP
Who is it, how did you get this number?

(Lights on JOE MILLER who is at a pay phone.)

JOE MILLER

Harry.

HARRY SHIP

Hold on a minute.

(HARRY SHIP walks over to the radio and turns it on loudly to the baseball game, then returns to the phone.)

HARRY SHIP

You're in a real mess, my friend. Where are you?

JOE MILLER

I can't say.

HARRY SHIP

Yes you can, no one is listening. Where are you?

JOE MILLER

Never mind that, Harry, I need you to listen. He pulled out his heater and it was him or me, and I shot him. That's it.

HARRY SHIP

Yes, I understand that. But actions have consequences, Joe, and your actions have made you a very popular man. Greco took over Davis's men and he is intent on finding you before the cops do.

JOE MILLER

It was me or him, Harry.

HARRY SHIP

I get it Joe. Where are you?

JOE MILLER

Fletcher's Field. I've been running all night, but I don't know where to go.

HARRY SHIP

Is any one following you?

JOE MILLER

I don't know. I don't think so. Harry, I can't live like this. I'll never make it out of the city.

HARRY SHIP

You have to stay calm. First, you need to get off the streets and wait out Greco's patrol.

JOE MILLER

I have to turn myself in, Harry. It's the only way I don't end up full of bullet holes. I can't be on the run like this much longer.

HARRY SHIP

Now hold on a minute, Joe. You think handing yourself over to the police is your best bet? Don't forget who it is exactly that they serve and protect. Taché has just as many men out there looking for you as Greco.

JOE MILLER

I'm done for, Harry. You got to help me.

HARRY SHIP

You need to get *The Herald*, Joe.

JOE MILLER

Reading the paper ain't gonna get me anywhere, Harry.

HARRY SHIP

No, I mean get in touch with *The Herald*, with the editor. Ted McCormick is the man you want. Talk to no one else. Only McCormick. He's never been bought and will jump at the opportunity for an exclusive like this. It will give you the chance to get your story straight before Taché strong-arms you into a confession. They won't be able to lay a finger on you with the whole city following your story.

JOE MILLER

Ted McCormick. Are you sure?

HARRY SHIP

Ted McCormick. It's your only move.

JOE MILLER

Okay. And what about you?

HARRY SHIP

What about me?

JOE MILLER

I must have put you in a pretty tight spot.

HARRY SHIP

Not as tight as the spot you put Davis in.

JOE MILLER

No one is after ya'?

HARRY SHIP

Some of Davis's men came by, but I told them I was looking for you, too. I said you stole from me and that if they found you, I wanted a piece of you before they did you in.

JOE MILLER

Sharp.

HARRY SHIP

Anyone who isn't out looking for you is too busy dealing with the press. Your face is on the front page of every paper. That's why McCormick is your only move.

JOE MILLER

Hold on.

(Beat.)

I think I was spotted. I gotta go.

HARRY SHIP

Yeah. Good luck.

Scene 3

(The foyer of HARRY SHIP's Gambling House. GORDIE QUINE is standing at the door. His face has healed, yet the marks of a beating have not disappeared. OCTAVE FRASER enters.)

OCTAVE FRASER

Gordie boy. How do you do?

GORDIE QUINE

Mr. Fraser. Hello.

OCTAVE FRASER

Enough with that. What did I tell you? You call me Octave, okay? You and me we can be best friends of life.

GORDIE QUINE

Sorry. Old habit I guess. Sorry.

OCTAVE FRASER

And another thing, boy. Stop saying sorry all the time. C'mon. Me, if I was big like you, forget it. Forget it. I'd be number one. Champion of the world.

(OCTAVE FRASER shadow boxes. GORDIE QUINE shifts nervously.)

OCTAVE FRASER

Relax, man. Just for laughs. C'mon.

(OCTAVE FRASER walks through, exits opposite side towards game rooms. GORDIE QUINE attempts to relax, rolls his shoulders, sighs. After a moment PAX PLANTE enters through the front door.)

PAX

Bonjour, jeune homme. Comment allez-vous?

GORDIE QUINE

Um,

PAX

Ah, pardon me. How do you do, son?

GORDIE QUINE

Good. Sor- My French, um-

PAX

No need to apologize.

GORDIE QUINE

Yeah-

PAX

Did you have an accident?

GORDIE QUINE

I'm sorr-

(Coughs.)

What?

PAX

Your face, son. Were you attacked?

GORDIE QUINE

Oh, no. I fight. I'm a fighter.

PAX

Pardon me?

GORDIE QUINE

Box, I mean, sir. I mean, I box.

PAX

Ah, you are a boxer. Of course. Big man like you, why not?

GORDIE QUINE

Why not what?

PAX

Why not be a boxer.

GORDIE QUINE

I am a boxer.

PAX

Yes. Is that why are you here then?

GORDIE QUINE

Yes. I believe I was meant to box, sir. I mean, yes.

PAX

No.

GORDIE QUINE

No?

PAX

No, I mean, why are you here if you are a boxer. Shouldn't you be at a gym training or something like that?

GORDIE QUINE

Oh, yes. No, I mean, I work here, too. Who are you?

PAX

Well I was just walking by and I thought I saw a friend walk in, so I followed.

GORDIE QUINE

This is your first time here?

PAX

Yes, I suppose it is. Why?

GORDIE QUINE

No reason. We have mostly regulars is all. Maybe I should get my boss, or-

PAX

No, no need for that. I was only passing by. Say how did your fight go then?

GORDIE QUINE

What do you mean? My fight ain't till Saturday.

PAX

Oh? Well, your face. I assumed, with the cuts and bruises, that you fought recently.

GORDIE QUINE

Oh. No. These- this is nothing, really. Who did you say you were?

PAX

I was just walking by. From training then?

GORDIE QUINE

Yeah, sure, from training.

PAX

So this week end then?

GORDIE QUINE

Yeah, Saturday.

PAX

Against Marcel Dubois.

GORDIE QUINE

Yeah, how did ya' know?

PAX

Everybody in the city is very excited for the fight. Of course I recognized you. I only wanted to make sure it was you.

GORDIE QUINE

Oh?

PAX

So you are Gordie Quine then?

GORDIE QUINE

Yup.

PAX

What is it they call you? Ah, yes: The Pride of the Point. Your training must be pretty tough if you are all banged up like this before a fight.

GORDIE QUINE

Yeah, sure. Tough. Very tough training.

PAX

So you are ready then? Ready for Marcel Dubois?

GORDIE QUINE

Yes, sir. I mean, Yeah, I'm ready.

PAX

And you are going to win, my boy, aren't you?

GORDIE QUINE

Yeah, sure, I'm gonna win. You bet, I'm gonna win. Knock him down in the fifth. I mean, work his body and stuff. Then knock him down. When I can.

PAX

Very good. In the fifth round, eh? Is that your plan of attack? Finish him in the fifth?

GORDIE QUINE

Yeah, I guess.

PAX

Is that what your trainer said to you? Take him down in the fifth?

GORDIE QUINE

Yeah, something like that.

PAX

But why the fifth?

GORDIE QUINE

What?

PAX

Why the fifth round, specifically? Why not the first, or the second, or the ninth? Curious that you say fifth, like that, no?

GORDIE QUINE

What? Who said the fifth? Listen, are you gonna go upstairs and play or what?

PAX

No, no, no. I am only passing by, I assure you. I thought I saw a friend of mine come in. Mr. Octave Fraser, do you know this man?

GORDIE QUINE

Mr. Fraser. I mean, Octave. Listen, why are you asking so many questions. Are you a cop or something?

PAX

No, no, no. I am not a police officer, I am a friend of Octave's, like you.

GORDIE QUINE

Like me?

PAX

Yes, a friend like you. And you could use a friend like me, I think.

GORDIE QUINE

Like you? Why do I need a friend like you?

PAX

Yes, like me. It is important to know who your real friends are. Do you not agree?

GORDIE QUINE

Yeah, sure. Your real friends.

PAX

Good. I'm glad to hear it, Gordie.

GORDIE QUINE

So, do you want me to get Mr. Fraser, I mean Octave, or something.

PAX

No thank you, Gordie. Like I said, I was only passing by, taking a look around. And I wanted to wish you good luck for your fight Saturday night.

GORDIE QUINE

Oh, yeah. Thanks.

PAX

Not that you need it, of course. Big, young man like you. The Pride of the Pointe!

GORDIE QUINE

Yeah, guess not.

PAX

The start of a very strong career, I am sure. As long as you wear him out and make it past the fifth, no?

GORDIE QUINE

Yeah, wear him out. Exactly. I'm gonna work his body, and I'm gonna wear him out and I'm gonna leave the Forum with the title fight. You bet ya.

PAX

Good, Gordie, good.

GORDIE QUINE

The Pride of the Pointe.

PAX

The Pride of the Pointe. Okay. Well good luck, Gordie, good luck. I must get going. It was a pleasure to make your acquaintance.

GORDIE QUINE

Yeah, nice to meet ya'. Say, what did you say your name was?

PAX

Oh, of course. Pacifique Plante. But you can call me Pax, Gordie.

GORDIE QUINE
Nice to meet ya', Pax.

PAX
Until next time, my young friend.

GORDIE QUINE
Yeah, see ya' round.

(PAX exits through the front door. Once he is out of sight, GORDIE QUINE begins to shadow box.)

GORDIE QUINE
(As he shadow boxes:)
That's right, wear him down, grind him, and tire him out. I'm coming for ya' Dubois, I'm coming, I'm gonna take you down.

(HARRY SHIP enters from the Games Rooms. GORDIE QUINE sees him and stops boxing.)

GORDIE QUINE
Oh, sorry, sir.

HARRY SHIP
I take it you're ready for Saturday.

GORDIE QUINE
You bet, sir. It's gonna be the start of a very strong career. You watch and see.

HARRY SHIP
I'm banking on it, Gordie. A strong career for you would be very good for the both of us, very good for our pocket books, if you know what I mean.

GORDIE QUINE
Sure.

HARRY SHIP
Just as long as you stay out of trouble.

GORDIE QUINE
I'm not getting into any trouble, sir.

HARRY SHIP
I'm no dummy, Gordie. I don't believe for a second a guy

your size was mugged.

GORDIE QUINE

You don't?

HARRY SHIP

Of course not. So why don't you just tell me what really happened to your face and get it over with.

GORDIE QUINE

Well,

HARRY SHIP

C'mon, Gordie.

GORDIE QUINE

I drank too much, and fell down some stairs, sir.

HARRY SHIP

You fell down some stairs?

GORDIE QUINNE

Yeah, I fell down some stairs.

(A radio bulletin suddenly cuts in. As the report begins GORDIE QUINE exits through the front door. HARRY SHIPS exits back towards the Game Rooms.)

Scene 4

VOICE ON THE RADIO

We interrupt our regular broadcast with a special update on Tuesday night's murder of underworld leader Harry Davis. After having been missing for over thirty six hours, lead suspect Louis Bercovitch, aka Joe Miller, has finally come out of hiding after having contacted Herald editor Ted McCormick, better known by his pen name Sean Edwin. The Herald reports that Bercovitch allegedly shot Davis by means of self-defense. When asked why he chose to surrender to McCormick rather than the authorities, Bercovitch answered that Davis had the authorities in his back pocket and that it would have been suicide. These latest comments have sparked a loud public outcry all across the province. "It can't happen here," say the people of Quebec. Davis's violent death punctuate what has been a busy news week for Montreal, leaving many to wonder if Monday's Mansfield street explosion is somehow connected to the shooting.

(A phone begins to ring.)

City officials have pledged to conduct a full probe, which has begun with the resignation of Captain Arthur Taché as police chief and head of the Morality Squad, as well as the dismissal of a dozen or so corrupt police officers.

(ASSELIN enters.)

In other news, fight fans all across the country are looking forward to-

(He turns off the radio and answers the phone.)

ASSELIN

Oui, bonjour. Monsieur le maire, bonjo-. Ah, yes, I forgot. My apologies. How do you do? Great to hear it. Yes, I am well. How was your afternoon? Oh, yes it is a beautiful course. The 17th hole is especially difficult, if my memory serves me correctly. Very good, sir, I play an 82 myself. Yes, we shall, we shall. Yes. No, nothing to worry about, everything is going ahead as planned. Yes, sir, easy money indeed. Pardon me? Because Mr. Plante believes that he can be more effective if the so-called Underworld does not know that he is the squad's new chief. Yes, he is the perfect man for the job, an excellent choice sir. He is very thorough. No, sir, not that thorough, I don't think. Yes it will be fine. I have notified Mr. Plante that his number one objective should be to uncover and terminate the margarine racket. The law will be maintained and justice will be served to the Dairy Farmer Union. Yes, sir. Absolutely. Enjoy the fight.

(ASSELIN hangs up. As the phone hits the receiver, a bell is rung and the lights fade. The boxing match is heard through the radio.)

Scene 5

VOICE ON THE RADIO

One more minute to go in the 4th round. Both fellas are cut above the right eye. Great action by Quine but he couldn't score one. Slowly tiring Dubois, who wasn't punching cleanly when he came out of it. Left hook is low, Dubois is warned by referee Rich Sapora. Quine looks up at the clock.

(PAX PLANTE and his MORALITY SQUAD raid a gambling ring. Their assault is swift and decisive. Along with the raid is a PHOTOGRAPHER who is instructed by PAX to photograph the scene and evidence.)

Four clean blows by Quine. He's hurting him now with his Sunday punches. Quine setting him up with those body blows. Dubois's left eye is beginning to close, too. The punches rocked him, he's very weary. He winces when he's hit now. The crowd senses the kill. Quine has Dubois up against the ropes.

(Bright flashes from the photographer's camera are successive as patrons as well as employees of the ring are arrested and led out of the room.)

And there's the bell. Well, certainly, that was one of the most damaging evidences of punching that you have seen in recent years. Quine apparently tired, put his combinations beautifully together, and rocked Dubois right to his heels. You know, friends, the quality that has carried the fame of Quebec Dairy butter across the province is yours for the asking. The next time that friendly grocer asks you "what will ya' have," give him that answer the whole province gives, Quebec Dairy Butter. C'mon, find out how satisfying really fine butter can be. Keep plenty of it in your icebox at home. Your guests will appreciate the finest salty flavour just as much as you do.

(Lights on HARRY SHIP, OCTAVE FRASER, and KELLS, who is no longer in uniform. They are playing a high stakes game of Barbotte. Money changes hands quickly.)

Well, hold onto your hats, this may be it. Here we go with round number 5, at the Forum stadium in Montreal, Quebec, brought to you by the Dairy Farmer Union of Quebec. Dubois is continually spearing with that right jab, keeping Quine off balance from getting power back into his punches. Round the ringside, the greatest sports writers in the country. Of course the greatest names are here, from the theatre, civic life, sports. Coach Dick Irvin is here with the brand new general manager of the Canadiens hockey club, Frank Selke. And the ravishing Lili St. Cyr is here, too, sitting next to promoter Harry Ship whose boy Quine is up against the ropes now. A minute and a half to go in this 5th round, Marcel Dubois in the white trunks, boxing for all he's worth. Quine in the black trunks. Quine trying to come through with that homerun punch. One more minute in round five. Dubois places his punches exceptionally well. He knows where they are going. Quine is hurt. Dubois boxing for his life again. Quine with those bull-like rushes of his, trying to move in to get one good shot, but Dubois placing his punches well. Thirty seconds to go, Quine has lost his mouthpiece. His right eye is busted open again. He is hurt with that shot. And another. He's hurt, folks.

Twenty seconds to go in the round. He's fighting now cautiously and rockily. He's just a catcher now, mouth open, left eye bleeding. The round is almost over.

(FLANNERY, who is also in civilian clothing, enters and stands behind HARRY SHIP, whispering something in his ear. HARRY SHIP nods and FLANNERY exits. The barbotte game continues.)

A tired battler, a chopping block. Dubois trying to knock him out. These are clean whistling shots, lefts and rights. How he can survive them, nobody knows. Heads shake at the ringside.

(FLANNERY enters with a hooded hostage. After a moment he removes the hood to reveal GORDIE QUINE. FLANNERY strangles and kills Quine.)

And a powerful left hook from Dubois. Quine is down, Quine is down. The fight is over. Dubois wins. What a devastating upset for challenger Gordie "The Pride of the Pointe" Quine, and his team. I don't think a single person in here tonight could have seen this coming. Just a missed opportunity for the southpaw Quine.

(Fade to black.)

ACT 5, Scene 1

(The broadcast of the match fades out. Knocking is heard. The lights fade back in. HARRY SHIP is lying on the couch. The knocks awake him. He gets up.)

HARRY SHIP

Come in.

(FLANNERY & KELLS enter through the door. They take their hats off as they enter.)

HARRY SHIP

What is it?

FLANNERY

Greco's joint was busted a few hours ago.

HARRY SHIP

That is not out of the ordinary, is it?

KELLS

The raid is not out of the ordinary.

FLANNERY

But they arrested everyone on site.

KELLS

Including Greco.

FLANNERY

And that is out of the ordinary.

HARRY SHIP

Alright

FLANNERY

There's more.

(To KELLS)

Tell him what you told me.

KELLS

I told you, we don't know for sure.

FLANNERY

Just tell him will ya'.

HARRY SHIP

What is it?

KELLS

The thing is, I'm not sure what I heard exactly, but it sure did look fishy. The other day at the precinct, before we got canned, I saw Octave talkin' to that lawyer type that's been busting all the game joints.

HARRY SHIP

What do you mean?

FLANNERY

Isn't it obvious.

HARRY SHIP

No, it isn't obvious. Fishy how?

KELLS

Fishy like they shook hands when it was all said and done.

HARRY SHIP

When what was all said and done?

KELLS

Well that's it. I'm not sure. But afterwards the lawyer told me that Octave was an acquaintance of his.

HARRY SHIP

Is that so?

KELLS

Yeah. I asked him how they knew each other, and he said that they were acquaintances.

HARRY SHIP

What is that supposed to mean?

FLANNERY

Let's be sensible here. Octave ain't dumb, he can read the paper just like you or me. He's gotta be seeing these crackdowns and thinking about his 97 priors.

HARRY SHIP

He's never been convicted; you know that, you arrested him.

FLANNERY

Doesn't matter. The way things are going, 97 arrests isn't gonna do anybody any favours. And he's got his wife and daughters to think about.

HARRY SHIP

I suppose he does. First Gordie, now Octave. I never would have thought.

FLANNERY

It's a vicious business.

HARRY SHIP

I trust you'll take care of it then?

FLANNERY

Yes, sir. Same as Gordie.

HARRY SHIP

Where is Octave now?

(OCTAVE FRASER enters the room.)

OCTAVE FRASER

Ici. My ears are on fire, Mr. Ship. How do you do? Mr. Kells, Mr. Flannery, how do you do.

FLANNERY

Hey, Oc, what's the word?

OCTAVE FRASER

Oh you know. Mr. Ship, your face, you look awful, terrible.

HARRY SHIP

I just got some bad news, Oc.

OCTAVE FRASER

Oh, no. What is it?

HARRY SHIP

Death in the family.

OCTAVE FRASER

Ah, mes condoléances, Mr. Ship, very sorry to hear that.

HARRY SHIP

There's more.

OCTAVE FRASER

Oh no.

HARRY SHIP

Why don't you have a seat, Octave.

(OCTAVE FRASER crosses to the table and chairs and sits.)

OCTAVE FRASER

Ah, that's good. All day I run around, getting this for my wife, doing that for my wife. She's going to kill me, ostie

FLANNERY

(Slowly moves towards OCTAVE FRASER.)

Real pain in the ass, she is, ain't she?

KELLS

That's why I ain't ever getting hitched. It's a sucker's game it is.

FLANNERY

(Behind OCTAVE FRASER.)

You ain't getting hitched because you're uglier than a hairless monkey.

HARRY SHIP

Maybe you should take a vacation, Octave. This Pax character, you know Pax, right?

OCTAVE FRASER

Only what I hear on the news.

HARRY SHIP

Well, he is creating some problems for our little business here. He just busted Greco's joint this after noon, and it ain't looking too good.

OCTAVE FRASER

Ah, shit.

HARRY SHIP

Yeah, well, you win some, you lose some, and it was Louis's turn to lose. Anyways, I think you should stay away from here for a few weeks, in the event that Mr. Plante and his white knights decide to pay us a visit. Take a little

vacation, so to speak.

OCTAVE FRASER

But why me, sir?

HARRY SHIP

I have a hard time believing he'll miss your 97 arrests. And I doubt he is looking to slap any wrists, no matter the size of the fish he catches.

OCTAVE FRASER

Very thoughtful, Mr. Ship.

HARRY SHIP

More like covering my bases, Octave. Until all this excitement blows over, at least.

FLANNERY

Soon hockey season and the World Series will start, and people will forget all about wanting to clean up the streets.

OCTAVE FRASER

Ah, my favourite time of year.

HARRY SHIP

Yeah, maybe I'll shut the house down until the New Year and concentrate on other projects.

KELLS

You could live off the margarine alone, sir.

OCTAVE FRASER

Some bread might help, no?

(OCTAVE FRASER laughs.)

OCTAVE FRASER

Oh, but, oh ciboire.

FLANNERY

What's a matter?

OCTAVE FRASER

I just remembered: my wife. Oh, seigneur.

KELLS

What about her?

OCTAVE FRASER

Oh, seigneur, pis mes filles, too. Oh, non. Non, non. I can't stay at the house, elles vont me rendre fou.

HARRY SHIP

It's better than jail, ain't it?

OCTAVE FRASER

Bof, of course. I exaggerate. She's not so bad, my wife. Could be worse, no? Could be very worse.

HARRY SHIP

You got that right, Octave. As long as you are breathing, it could always be worse.

(FLANNERY takes out a rope and prepares to make his move.)

OCTAVE FRASER

Yes, sir.

HARRY SHIP

Could always be worse.

(As FLANNERY lifts the rope over OCTAVE FRASER's head a dozen swat officers swarm the room, followed by PAX PLANTE and a PHOTOGRAPHER. FLANNERY conceals the rope.)

PAX

Hands in the air, this is a raid.

(To the PHOTOGRAPHER:)

Make sure to get shots of the doors especially.

(To FLANNERY & KELLS:)

Gentlemen, I wish I could say that I was surprised to see you here. Well, at least you were able to find employment so quickly.

(To OCTAVE FRASER:)

Heureux de vous revoir, monsieur.

OCTAVE FRASER

Maître.

PAX

J'espère que vous n'avez pas perdu votre portefeuille de nouveau.

OCTAVE FRASER

Pas aujourd'hui.

PAX

Good. It is such a pain to have to replace all of one's identification cards, isn't it?

(To HARRY SHIP.)

And you, sir, must be the famous Harry Ship. I have to say, I thought you would be taller.

HARRY SHIP

I thought you'd have more hair.

PAX

Very good, Mr. Ship, very good. I don't think I need to tell you what laws you have broken here in this illegal establishment. You don't strike me as the ignorant type.

HARRY SHIP

Is that a compliment?

PAX

Take it as you will, sir. You will need all the positive energy you can get in the coming weeks. There are enough charges here to put you and most of your associates in jail for a long time.

HARRY SHIP

We'll see about that.

PAX

Yes, we will.

(To SWAT OFFICERS:)

Arrest these men gentlemen. It's time to gather evidence.

(SHIP, FRASER, FLANNERY, & KELLS are handcuffed and lead out of the room.)

PAX

Leave Mr. Fraser behind. I want to ask him some questions. And you three, make sure to find the Margarine.

HARRY SHIP

You better be careful, Octave. Think about your family.

PAX

He'll be fine, Mr. Ship.

HARRY SHIP

You'll be hearing from my attorney, Plante.

(SHIP, FLANNERY, & KELLS are lead out of the room.)

PAX

Un homme très sûr de lui, ce monsieur Ship.

OCTAVE FRASER

Oh oui, il est très impressionnant. Très bon dans ce qu'il fait.

PAX

Briser la loi que vous voulez dire?

OCTAVE FRASER

La loi d'un est-elle toujours la loi des autres?

PAX

Cela sonne comme le raisonnement d'un homme qui a 97, non, maintenant 98 arrestations sous sa ceinture.

(Some members of the Morality Squad enter.)

PAX

And, what did you find?

OFFICER 1

Nothing, sir.

PAX

Not anything?

OFFICER 2

No, sir.

PAX

And you looked everywhere.

OFFICER 3

Yes, everywhere.

OFFICER 2
No margarine anywhere.

PAX
(To OCTAVE FRASER)
Dites-moi où la margarine se trouve, M. Fraser, et je vous aiderai avec vos 97 arrestations antérieures.

OCTAVE FRASER
La margarine? Vous devriez le savoir, c'est illégal au Québec

PAX
Où est-elle, Octave?

OCTAVE FRASER
Je n'ai aucune idée de ce dont vous parlez, Maître.

PAX
Take him out of here.

(The OFFICER leads OCTAVE FRASER out of the room.)

OCTAVE FRASER
(As he exits:)
Bonne chance, Maître Plante.

(The OFFICER and PLANTE exit through the door. PAX searches the room for clues. He looks everywhere. OCTAVE FRASER is brought to his usual cell on stage. After a few moments the OFFICERS enter.)

OFFICER 2
Sir.

PAX
Yes. What is it.

OFFICER 1
We have some news, sir.

PAX
What is it?

OFFICER 3
Ship has made bail, sir.

PAX
Already?

OFFICER 1
Yes, sir.

PAX
And the others?

OFFICER 3
We still have them. For now.

PAX
For now?

OFFICER 2
Yes, for now. Ship's lawyer is very vicious.

PAX
Fine. That is fine. We have the photographs at least.

OFFICER 3
There's more.

PAX
Yes?

(ASSELIN enters.)

ASSELIN
Vos hommes me disent qu'ils n'ont pas encore trouvé la margarine. Est-ce exact, Plante?

PAX
Nous cherchons toujours, monsieur.

ASSELIN
Bien mieux trouver quelque chose rapidement. On ne voudrait pas que votre promotion soit de courte durée.

PAX
Nous faisons notre possible, monsieur. Vous savez-bien que ceci est notre dixième descente cette semaine et les jeux restent fermés après que nous quittons la scène. Nous avons fait des douzaines d'arrestations et nous avons assez de

preuve pour condamner la plupart de nos suspects. Si nous continuons à travailler fort, les résultats souhaités viendront, je vous l'assure. Avec tout le respect que je vous dois, monsieur Asselin, accordez-moi un peu de mérite, quand même.

ASSELIN

Vous êtes dans de petits draps, Plante. Et je ne vous donne rien jusqu'à ce que vous ayez mis un terme à ce commerce illicite de la margarine. Vous comprenez? Les syndicats agricoles me tourmentent avec cela. Et plus ma vie est misérable, plus je vais vous rendre la vôtre misérable, vous me comprenez?

PAX

Je comprends.

ASSELIN

Je veux tous vos rapports, immédiatement.

(They all exit. After some time HARRY SHIP enters. He crosses to the radio and turns it on. Oscar Peterson's "I Got Rhythm" is playing. He looks around and begins to put back into place whatever the raid disturbed. The lights slowly fade as the bulletin is heard.)

VOICE ON THE RADIO

We interrupt our regular Boogie Woogie Broadcast with a news flash. The body of Gordie "The Pride of the Pointe" Quine was finally found tonight in the Lachine Canal down by the Charlevoix Bridge. Police suspect that the one time up and coming middleweight, who has been missing for over two months, took his own life shortly after his loss to Marcel Dubois. In other news, despite a flurry of arrests and convictions spearheaded by his investigations, Police Chief Pacifique Plante has become the ninth head of the Morality Squad to be relieved of duties in ten years. Pax Plante, as the lawyer had come to be known, declined to comment. Celebrity gambler and fight promoter Harry Ship appeared briefly in court today to face charges of racketeering, gambling, and bribing. The case has once again been postponed, this time until further notice. Not so lucky, however, is Ship's one time employee, Octave Fraser, who sits in Bordeaux and awaits his trial. And now a word from our sponsor. What's that delicious taste everybody loves on their toast? That's right, Quebec Dairy

Butter. For that truly tasty toast, buy Quebec Dairy Butter. We return now to our Boogie Woogie Broadcast with Peter Barry's hit song "Margarie Margarine".

(End.)

Afterword

The creation of *Barbotte* is hugely indebted to Al Palmer's scandalous chronicle *Montreal Confidential* (1950). While the short book does a marvelous job of capturing the essence of life in Montreal in the 1940s, it functions as little more than a guide to the city's nightlife reported through anecdotes and gossip. Palmer, who covered sports as well as the police beat for the *Montreal Gazette* and *Montreal Herald*, recounts colourful stories of celebrities, star athletes, rival singing hobos, and gritty tales of the underworld. The book, in its conception, is cheap entertainment no different from any number of gossip magazines that pollute the racks by the checkout counter at your local grocery store; it is kitsch and it reeks of old boys' club mentality.

There is a passage in *Montreal Confidential* where Palmer seeks to give potential tourists pointers for an enjoyable stay in the city. He explains how to behave in certain restaurants for the best service, advises dispensing high tips, how to pronounce certain words so as to not divulge yourself as an outsider, and tells where the prettiest girls like to go dancing. He also writes that the best way to get along with any Montrealer is simple: just talk to him or her about how great of a city Montreal is.

On the back cover he writes: "It is a helluva town to visit, a helluva town to live in and a helluva town to come back to. We love every grimy square of it," and I argue that contemporary Montrealers are no different. While I believe that proclaiming the city to be the greatest in the world would be provincial, I have no qualms admitting that I believe it to be the most fascinating in the country. The world that Palmer's book relates goes a long way in supporting that belief.

The city's history abounds with engaging stories that are waiting to be discovered and retold to a new generation of audiences. To a certain extent, my main motivation for exploring the circumstances of the 1946 shooting of mob boss Harry Davis was my desire to reconstruct the story into a compelling narrative before anyone else could. I do not remember which aspect of the story initially drew me in, whether it was the mystery and suspense that surrounded the shooting itself, or if it was the absurdity of the raids on gambling houses and bookmakers, but the more research I did, the more I realized that all of the essential elements of a successful story were already before me. Palmer's book led me to William Weintraub's *City Unique: Montreal Days and Nights in the 1940s and '50s* (1996), which in turn led me to Pacifique Plante's *Montréal*

sous le règne de la pègre (1950), and Alain Stanké and Jean-Louis Morgan, *Pax, lutte à finir avec la pègre* (1972), which eventually led me to exploring the archives of *The Gazette* (1946-52), *The Herald* (1946-52), and *The Star* (1946-52). Though certain details were not always congruent, such as the number of times Davis was shot, or the penalties suffered by crooked police officers, a natural narrative was taking shape. I had all the elements I would need: colourful and charismatic characters, cause and effect, high stakes, and scandal.

Many of the characters used in this play are based on real people. Harry Ship, Harry Davis, J-O. Asselin, Joe Miller, Arthur Taché, Pacifique Plante, and Louis Greco all existed, and with the exception of Asselin, most of their major actions in the play were pulled out of research. Sections of dialogue in the ultimate altercation between Miller and Davis, for example, were transcribed verbatim from Greco's testimony as well as different articles from daily newspapers. Pax's character was created from his own accounts and experiences, and his voice and demeanor were very much inspired by Stanké and Morgan's interviews. Asselin's association with the underworld is purely conjecture and there is no way of knowing for sure whether or not he was corrupt. Yet, his manner towards Pax was

influenced by the latter's account of their meetings leading up to Pax's appointment as head of the Morality Squad, as well as his eventual dismissal. What's more, considering the casual relationship between the police department and the underworld before Pax's ascension to police chief, I do not find it much of a stretch at all to presume the depth of the corruption of City Hall.

Asselin's character, for that reason, is in fact a combination of three figures: Fernand Dufresne, Albert Langlois, and, of course, Asselin. After Davis's shooting, Dufresne hoped to avoid a judicial inquiry, and fired Captain Arthur Taché for no other reason than to appease reformers and civic organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Retail Merchants' Association. He then hired Pax as the eighth head of the Morality Squad in ten years. Langlois, who succeeded Dufresne, was the man who fired Pax with the pretense of insubordination. The true reason, however, was that Langlois despised the flamboyant nature of Pax's arrests, as well as the vast amount of publicity that he brought upon the police department and city hall. Pax was dismissed from his position after only eighteen months and it would be another six years before he would return to the police department.

Pax was an interesting character to explore because nearly all the research I did depicted him as a mild-mannered, unthreatening man. Very few people, both within the underworld and city hall, believed that he would pose any menace to their operations. According to Palmer, upon his promotion to chief of police, he was given a diminutive office and was ignored by foes and peers alike. Never did they expect that he would not only attack the illegal gambling houses, but taxi rackets, nightclubs, prostitution, and even church bingo games. He was the first to require cab drivers to provide identification within the sight of passengers in order to filter out known criminals from the profession. He also monitored certain clubs and restaurants for suspicious patrons, and if known criminals were discovered to be regular customers, police would harass the establishment until either said patrons were discouraged from returning, or the place in question would be closed for business.

Pax would meet his match in Harry Ship, the celebrity gambler, promoter, and restaurateur who also ran a bookmaking operation and a gaming house. Described as amiable and soft-spoken, Ship began gambling as a teenager, spending two years at Queens University studying mathematics and learning to quickly calculate odds. By the

time he was thirty, he owned a number businesses, including casinos, restaurants, and clubs, such as the famous Chez Parée. He was a devoted gambler who would sometimes make up to forty bets per day, earning as much as half a million dollars a week, which would equal nearly 5.5 million dollars in 2012.

While the sequence of events in the play takes place over a couple of weeks, Pax and Ship's legal feud would last into the early fifties. Though Pax had gathered close to five hundred exhibits and seventeen thousand pages of dispositions, Ship's team of legal advisors would succeed in postponing the case twenty-two times, ultimately leading to a mere six months of prison time for the accused.

Officers Flannery and Kells, both of whom were completely fabricated, were initially conceived to function as clown types that could stand in for any other member of the Service de Police de la Ville de Montreal. I did not want them to be taken seriously at all. The more I wrote, however, the more their characters moved away from being purely farcical. Flannery evolved into a veteran foot soldier who does what he needs to survive, while Kells is more of a rookie and is still learning the subtleties of the battlefield. And though they are both crooked police officers, they are not entirely unlikable. That they both

join Harry Ship's outfit after they are made scapegoats by Asselin does not mean that they have switched sides in an inverted version of good versus evil. The central concept of the play was to demonstrate that the differences between underworld outfits and city hall are scarce. The only distinction, I would argue, is that the former does not pretend to be anything other than what it is: *organized crime*.

Though the character of Octave Fraser is based on a man who was in fact arrested ninety-seven times as an *homme de paille*, that is, a patsy, everything else about him is entirely fabricated. As the writing of the play progressed, his character evolved into something of an everyman, a simple yet wise soul who functions as both a comic relief as well as the casualty in a power struggle between forces that are beyond his control. The man on whom he is based spent many years in prison after he was arrested by Pax, yet when he happened to run-in to the former lawyer and chief of police after his release, he expressed no resentment at all; to the ex-convict's mind, they were both men who were simply doing their jobs. This was the essential characteristic that I wanted to portray in Octave Fraser: a man who is simply earning his pay, a man who,

though he is simple in many ways, knows better than to view the world in a black versus white opposition.

Gordie "The Pride of the Pointe" Quine is another completely fabricated character. Quine, however, pays the ultimate price even if he is unfairly manipulated and used. While it is an easy trap to romanticize the characters and stories of the underworld, it is important to remember that many of the people involved, on both sides of law, are ultimately selfish and dangerous individuals. Even Ship, who was something of a local celebrity and who was very well liked, is still, at the end of the day, a gangster no different from Harry Davis, who by all accounts was a tough, mean man. I wanted Gordie Quine's progression as a character and his eventual murder to typify the high stakes and consequences one accepts when getting involved with the criminal underworld, even if one is only a doorman, a driver, or a bartender. What's more, the thread of a fixed boxing match allowed me to further use and explore the conventions of the gangster story.

Along with historical and social studies, as well as recourse to news archives, a large part of my research was watching countless gangster films in order to recreate the proper. The dynamic between characters, the idiom, and particularly the story arc are all elements that I studied

closely. The arc of a gangster film typically concludes with the downfall of the protagonist, either via greed, treachery, or bad luck. While Ship is arrested at the end of *Barbotte*, he is, as in real life, released after forty-five minutes. His six months in prison is a small price to pay compared to Pax who does in fact lose his job and is eventually forced to flee the country due to death threats.

Though margarine was indeed illegal in Canada from 1886 to 1948, the black-market circumstances described in the play are of course exaggerated. I do not know whether the trade of margarine was indeed one of Harry Ship's many business ventures, yet I felt that I could use this racket to portray the sometimes arbitrary and questionable process behind legislation. For example, the prohibition of bordellos in Montreal was only enforced once the navy threatened to stop docking at the city's port because too many sailors were contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Worried that the nightlife industry would suffer, the city shut down all bordellos, which for a long time, enjoyed the same friendly relationship with the police that the gambling houses maintained until the arrival of Pax. My use of a margarine racket was inspired by musician Peter Barry's first hit song of his own composition, titled "Margie Margarine". Barry, one of the most successful

musicians of the era, composed the song as a criticism of Quebec Premier Maurice Duplessis whose banning of margarine was motivated by dairy farmers who wished to thwart any possible competition for their butter. The song was loudly applauded by English Montreal, as the province's prejudiced electoral map gave rural ridings more seats in the legislature, as opposed to Montreal, where impoverished families could not afford to buy butter. Barry, who undoubtedly performed at Ship's many clubs and restaurants, thus sings:

My mother go to the grocery store,
To buy a pound of butter or more
But the butter price is much too high
So mother sit at home and cry.
This is democracy, I am told,
So why can't margarine be sold? (sic)

Joe Miller could not have foreseen how much of an impact his shooting of Davis would have on the future of the city, and we will never know whether his actions were in fact out of self-defense. Yet, whatever happened in that office set in motion a sea change: the police department was cleaned up (even if only temporarily), gambling houses all but disappeared, and the Italian mafia took over from a crumbling Jewish mob that suddenly found

itself preoccupied with legal strife, much like the mafia has in turn been experiencing in the last ten years or so. I believe this story is an important moment in Montreal's history that can help us to better understand the city's current battle against organized crime, except instead of the Morality Squad we have Groupe Eclipse, and instead of margarine or gambling, it is collusion in the construction and snow removal industries and over zealous riot police. If I were to write a play about current events, I might explore any number of high-profile incidents involving police officers injuring or killing civilians in Quebec over the last ten years. I might also question how, since 1999, there have been 339 such cases, and only three officers ultimately faced charges. But, then again, creating such a play might get me accidentally shot.

Appendix A

Act 1, Scene 1
(English version of pages 4-11)

ASSELIN

Entrez. You can go now Mr. Greco.

LOUIS GRECO

Yeah, you bet.

*(LOUIS GRECO turns to leave. CPT. TACHÉ enters,
followed by OFFICERS FLANNERY & KELLS.)*

LOUIS GRECO

If it ain't the Paddy Squad. It's almost noon, shouldn't you micks be at the bar already?

OFFICER KELLS

(Taking hold of his nightstick.)

Mind yer bloody manners.

OFFICER FLANNERY

Easy, boyo. You'll never catch your breath if ya lose yer temper every time a guinea says something ignorant.

LOUIS GRECO

I thought coppers were supposed to have a sense of humour. Isn't that why you wear those ridiculous looking uniforms?

OFFICER KELLS

Funny you mention my uniform since your wife likes-

ASSELIN

Bon. Assez. Capitaine Taché, what it is?

CPT. TACHÉ

There's been an incident.

LOUIS GRECO

I'm already bored. I'll see you flatfoots later.

CPT. TACHÉ

Just a minute, Greco.

ASSELIN

What was the incident, Capitaine, spit it out.

CPT. TACHÉ

There was an explosion at Harry Davis's Mansfield street operation. Looks like someone threw a grenade or a firebomb.

LOUIS GRECO

Hold on a minute.

ASSELIN

Sacrement! Details, Captain, give me the details.

CPT. TACHÉ

No injuries or deaths. Very little damage. The attempt was botched.

ASSELIN

So what is the problem then?

CPT. TACHÉ

The press is the problem. They are all over it, calling it a mob war, saying Montreal is the new Chicago. The whole thing will be on at least four front pages by tomorrow.

ASSELIN

Did you arrest someone to appease them, Capitaine?

CPT. TACHÉ

I would if I could. No witnesses, no suspects.

ASSELIN

Bon. But that hasn't stopped you before, has it?

LOUIS GRECO

Never mind witnesses and suspects. I bet ya' anything it was that mutt Joe Miller.

CPT. TACHÉ

Your employer said something similar.

ASSELIN

Joe Miller? Why is that name familiar to me?

LOUIS GRECO

He used to have my job.

ASSELIN

And now?

CPT. TACHÉ

He's a known associate of Harry Ship.

ASSELIN

What was it that you said about putting people in their place, Mr. Greco?

LOUIS GRECO

I'll look into it, goddamn it.

(LOUIS GRECO exits.)

ASSELIN

Flannery, follow Mr. Greco. Kells, find Miller and follow him.

OFFICERS FLANNER & KELLS

Yes, sir.

(They exit.)

ASSELIN

Do you believe Mr. Miller is responsible?

CPT. TACHÉ

It doesn't matter what I believe. Davis does.

ASSELIN

A lover's quarrel?

CPT. TACHÉ

Something like that. From what I hear, Miller asked to open his own Game House, Davis turned him down, Miller took exception and said things he shouldn't have.

ASSELIN

These gangsters and their short tempers. How bad is the press?

CPT. TACHÉ

Bad enough to excite the voters.

ASSELIN

Very well. Call a press conference and announce the formation of a special committee that will lead an investigation on the incident. Fire five, no ten, fire ten of your officers and say that mistakes were made and that the department is urging transparency and accountability.

CPT. TACHÉ

Yes, sir.

ASSELIN

Wait. Call it a special task force.

CPT. TACHÉ

Yes, sir.

ASSELIN

Now what about Mr. Davis and Mr. Ship? Is this going to become a problem for us?

CPT. TACHÉ

Hard to say. Mr. Davis's operations are as strong as ever, he's got a firm hold on his Edgeman status, and he maintains authority, but Mr. Ship is smart, enthusiastic, and well liked. But I think this whole thing will blow over soon enough.

ASSELIN

Let us hope as much. The press has an annoying habit of throwing fuel to our fires.

CPT. TACHÉ

Yes, but the voters are fickle. Soon Lily St Cyr will have a new number, and that will be all the voters will want to talk about.

ASSELIN

Thank heavens for Madame St-Cyr. If you were a gambling man, would you put your money on Davis, or on Ship?

CPT. TACHÉ

Gambling is illegal, sir. But my gut tells me Davis would maintain his position.

ASSELIN

Very good. A gambling man would also be wise to bet on the Dubois boy this weekend, if gambling were legal in this fair city.

(There's a knock at the door.)

ASSELIN

That will be all. Entrez!

(CPT. TACHÉ exits as PAX enters.)

ASSELIN

Maître Plante. I don't suppose this is a social visit?

PAX

No, sir. Not that I was eavesdropping, sir, but were you and Capitaine Taché discussing this weekend's fight?

ASSELIN

Yes, we were. Are you a fan of the fights, Maître Plante?

PAX

No, sir. I do not like the crowd it attracts.

ASSELIN

Yes, of course. Those degenerate gamblers persist despite the law, do they not? What will it be? I have important appointments piling up while you stand here.

PAX

I've just got word of the explosion on Mansfield. I am available if I am needed.

ASSELIN

A very unfortunate event. Thank you, Maître, but our finest men are investigating the case as we speak, and a lawyer can only do so much.

PAX

You would be pleasantly surprised by how much I can accomplish, sir. And though I don't doubt that you are doing all that you can, I do, however, doubt as to how fine our men really are. They are, as a collective, rather lax, I would say, sir.

ASSELIN

I am proud to say that we are a step ahead of you there Maître Plante. Capitaine Taché is seeing to the proper developments and adjustments to our department. As Chairman of the city's executive committee, I insist we maintain a high level of expectation for, as well as a dedication to the improvement of life for our dear citizens and voters.

PAX

That sounds very good, sir. Unfortunately, I do not exclude Capitaine Taché from the problem, sir.

ASSELIN

Capitaine Taché is a very capable officer of the law. His tenure as Chief of the Morality Squad has been exemplary.

PAX

Oh, let's be serious. Captain Taché is the 7th chief of the so-called Morality Squad in the last ten years. And the city's crime problem has not only persisted in that time, but has also gotten more organized and more resourceful. The Squad is nothing more than a posse and it is anything but moral.

ASSELIN

I would suggest you be careful throwing around baseless accusations, Maître Plante. As a man of the law, you should know better.

PAX

I have not accused anybody, sir. Not yet. However, my colleague Maître Drapeau and I have assembled a very detailed case against known gangsters and associates. Individuals such as Harry Davis, Louis Greco, Fred Zerbotiny, Louis Greco-

ASSELIN

I am aware of the going-ons in this city, Maître Plante.

PAX

And still these men are out free to pursue their illegal and dangerous activities. Why, Mr. Asselin?

ASSELIN

We are doing all that we can with the resources that we have.

PAX

Is that why Gaming Houses, of which there are hundreds across the city, are up and running within hours of having been raided by your Morality Squad?

ASSELIN

I do not appreciate the tone that you are taking with me, Maitre Plante.

PAX

I am getting carried away, I appologize. Hire me as chief of the Morality Squad. I will end this Feydeau Farce.

ASSELIN

Captain Taché is the Chief of the Morality Squad. Why don't you worry about the job that you do have, which is to build a case against the illegal trade and production of margarine, instead of the one that you do not, Maitre Plante, before you have no job at all...

PAX

I very much doubt that Captain Taché is doing all that he can. Why are so few patrons ever caught or fined? Why does he not use the press to his advantage, to show the people what really goes on in this city?

ASSELIN

These cases require substantial evidence, and not mere accusations. We as well are conducting a probe, and if we require your services, Maître Plante, we will contact you. Until then, make a more productive use of your time as an employee of the city.

PAX

These individuals do not live by the laws and rules of regular society. They do what they want, and they take what they want. These people are outside of the law, Mr. Asselin. And what's more, I have reason to believe that people within this administration, some of which rank very high, protect these-

ASSELIN

Are you accusing me of corruption?

PAX

That is not what I-

ASSELIN

You are accusing the Mayor, then?

PAX

No, I-

ASSELIN

I have had it with your baseless allegations, Plante.

(Picks up his phone and begins to dial.)

And I am prepared to file a grievance.

(Into receiver:)

Le bureau de Maire Houde, s'il vous plait.

(To PAX:)

Do you have anything else you want to add?

PAX

No, sir.

ASSELIN

(Into receiver:)

Messieur le Maire, bonjour. Good thank you, and you?

(To PAX:)

Then out you go.

(PAX exits.)

Appendix B

ACT 4, Scene 1 (English version of pages 53-57)

PAX

Excuse me, sir, but you wouldn't happen to have the time, would you?

OCTAVE FRASER

I do not. But the clock on the wall says it is quarter to ten.

PAX

Ah, of course. One would think that I would remember the clock on the wall with all the time that I spend here.

OCTAVE FRASER

Sometimes the things that are right in front of us are the most difficult to see.

PAX

Oh yes. Well said, sir.

(Beat.)

You as well spend a lot of time here, do you not? You seem very familiar to me, I must admit.

OCTAVE FRASER

Not so much time, no.

PAX

I am sure I saw you here only a few weeks ago.

OCTAVE FRASER

A couple of weeks ago? Ah, yes. I lost my wallet. A Good Samaritan brought it here. And do you believe all my money was left untouched?

PAX

You don't say?

OCTAVE FRASER

The goodness of people can surprise you sometimes.

PAX

Yes, especially in these dangerous times. You have heard, I am sure, of Harry Davis's shooting?

OCTAVE FRASER

Yes. Just awful.

PAX

Well, he led a dangerous lifestyle. It is to be expected.

OCTAVE FRASER

Perhaps. But to my knowledge, or at least from what I see in the papers, Mr. Davis was recently married. His poor bride must be very distressed.

PAX

Yes. My prayers are with her. What else do you know about Mr. Davis? From the papers, of course.

OCTAVE FRASER

Oh, not much. Only that he is, or was rather, a boxing enthusiast. He was always mentioned on the radio to be in attendance.

PAX

Ah, yes.

OCTAVE FRASER

Why do you ask?

PAX

Oh, just passing the time. You don't mind do you?

OCTAVE FRASER

Not at all. I am here anyways.

PAX

Yes, why are you here so early?

OCTAVE FRASER

You wouldn't believe me if I told you.

PAX

Try me.

OCTAVE FRASER

Well, I was taking a walk after breakfast, in order to escape my wife for a few moments, you understand.

PAX

Oh yes.

OCTAVE FRASER

Well, I was walking and I came across a lost wallet. So, I brought it here so that it may be returned to its owner.

PAX

Now, c'mon.

OCTAVE FRASER

I swear it.

PAX

One good turn deserves another, eh?

OCTAVE FRASER

Exactly.

PAX

And now what?

OCTAVE FRASER

Now my feet are too sore to walk any further. So I am waiting for my wife to come fetch me.

PAX

So whom do you think will step in as Edgeman, now that Davis is gone?

OCTAVE FRASER

The what? The Edgeman?

PAX

Yes. The leader, so to speak.

OCTAVE FRASER

Oh, I wouldn't know. I don't follow these things. I prefer sports.

PAX

So the name Harry Ship means nothing to you?

OCTAVE FRASER

He is the new manager for the Canadiens, no?

PAX

No, he's more of the boxing crowd.

OCTAVE FRASER

Of course! The promoter.

PAX

So you have heard of him?

OCTAVE FRASER

I've heard of his fighters. Scrappy boys with quick feet.

PAX

Nothing else?

OCTAVE FRASER

About Harry Ship? I think he has a restaurant, too. But way to fancy for my tastes. No, me and my wife, we like to keep it simple. Nothing fancy. But you, you should go. A lot of lawyer types must go.

PAX

Pardon me?

OCTAVE FRASER

I mean people with money.

PAX

Yes, but what makes you think I am a lawyer?

OCTAVE FRASER

Are you not?

PAX

Yes, I am. But how did you guess?

(OFFICER KELLS enters unnoticed.)

OCTAVE FRASER

I am simple, Monsieur, but I am not stupid. I believe I will go wait for my wife outside.

PAX

Let me give you my card, in case you one day need representation.

OCTAVE FRASER

Thank you. A pleasure to make your acquaintance, Maître Plante.

PAX

Oui, pareillement.

(PAX & OCTAVE FRASER shake hands.)

OFFICER KELLS

(Stepping forward:)

Mr. Fraser, your ride is here.

OCTAVE FRASER

Oh. Thank you officer. Au revour Maître Plante.

PAX

Au revoir.

(OCTAVE FRASER exits.)

Appendix C

Act 5, Scene 1
(English version of pages 77-83)

PAX

Hands in the air, this is a raid.

(To the PHOTOGRAPHER:)

Make sure to get shots of the doors especially.

(To FLANNERY & KELLS:)

Gentlemen, I wish I could say that I was surprised to see you here. Well, at least you were able to find employment so quickly.

(To OCTAVE FRASER:)

Nice to see you again, Monsieur.

OCTAVE FRASER

Maitre.

PAX

You haven't lost your wallet again, I hope.

OCTAVE FRASER

Not today.

PAX

Good. It is such a pain to have to replace all of one's identification cards, isn't it?

(To HARRY SHIP.)

And you, sir, must be the famous Harry Ship. I have to say, I thought you would be taller.

HARRY SHIP

I thought you'd have more hair.

PAX

Very good, Mr. Ship, very good. I don't think I need to tell you what laws you have broken here in this illegal establishment. You don't strike me as the ignorant type.

HARRY SHIP

Is that a compliment?

PAX

Take it as you will, sir. You will need all the positive energy you can get in the coming weeks. There are enough charges here to put you and most of your associates in jail

for a long time.

HARRY SHIP
We'll see about that.

PAX
Yes, we will.

(To SWAT OFFICERS:)
Arrest these men gentlemen. It's time to gather the evidence.

(SHIP, FRASER, FLANNERY, & KELLS are handcuffed and lead out of the room.)

PAX
Leave Mr. Fraser behind. I want to ask him some questions. And you three, make sure to find the Margarine.

HARRY SHIP
You better be careful, Octave. Think about your family.

PAX
He'll be fine, Mr. Ship.

HARRY SHIP
You'll be hearing from my attorney, Plante.

(SHIP, FLANNERY, & KELLS are lead out of the room.)

PAX
A very confident man, is he not.

OCTAVE FRASER
Oh yes, he is very impressive. Very good at what he does.

PAX
Breaking the law you mean?

OCTAVE FRASER
That is relative, I suppose.

PAX
The law is the law, Mr. Fraser.

OCTAVE FRASER
Yes, but do you never question who it is that makes the laws, and why, Maître Plante?

PAX

That sounds like the reasoning of a man who has 97, no, now 98 arrests under his belt.

(A member of the Morality Squad enters.)

PAX

And, what did you find?

OFFICER 1

Nothing, sir.

PAX

Not anything?

OFFICER 1

No, sir.

PAX

And you looked everywhere.

OFFICER 1

Yes, everywhere. No margarine anywhere.

PAX

(To OCTAVE FRASER)

Tell me where the margarine is, Mr. Fraser, and I will help you with your 97 prior arrests.

OCTAVE FRASER

Margarine? But is margarine not still illegal in this province?

PAX

Where is it Octave?

OCTAVE FRASER

I don't know what you are talking about, sir.

PAX

Take him out of here.

(The OFFICER leads OCTAVE FRASER out of the room.)

OCTAVE FRASER

(As he exits:)

Good luck, Maître Plante.

(The OFFICER and PLANTE exit through the door. PAX searches the room for clues. He looks everywhere. OCTAVE FRASER is brought to his usual cell. After a few moments an OFFICER enters.)

OFFICER 2

Sir.

PAX

Yes. What is it.

OFFICER 2

I have some news, sir.

PAX

What is it?

OFFICER 2

Ship has made bail, sir.

PAX

Already?

OFFICER 2

Yes, sir.

PAX

And the others?

OFFICER 2

We still have them. For now.

PAX

For now?

OFFICER 2

Yes, for now. Ship's lawyer is very vicious.

PAX

Fine. That is fine. We have the photographs at least.

OFFICER 2

There's more.

PAX

Yes?

(ASSELIN enters.)

ASSELIN

Your men tell me they cannot find any margarine anywhere. Is that correct, Plante?

PAX

We are still looking, sir.

ASSELIN

Yes, well you better find something soon. Wouldn't want your promotion to be so short lived, would we.

PAX

We are doing everything thing we can, sir. This is our 10th raid this week, and the gambling operations are staying shut. We have made dozens of arrests and have the evidence to convict almost all of our suspects. If we keep working hard, the desired results will come, I assure you. With all due respect, give me credit where it is due, sir.

ASSELIN

You are on thin ice, Plante. I will give you nothing until you put an end to this illicit trade of margarine. You understand that? The farmers unions are up my ass with this. It is making my life very miserable. And the more my life is miserable, the more I will make your life miserable, you understand me? Now all your reports, immediately. Let's go.

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Montreal Star (An broadsheet afternoon paper that folded in 1976)